

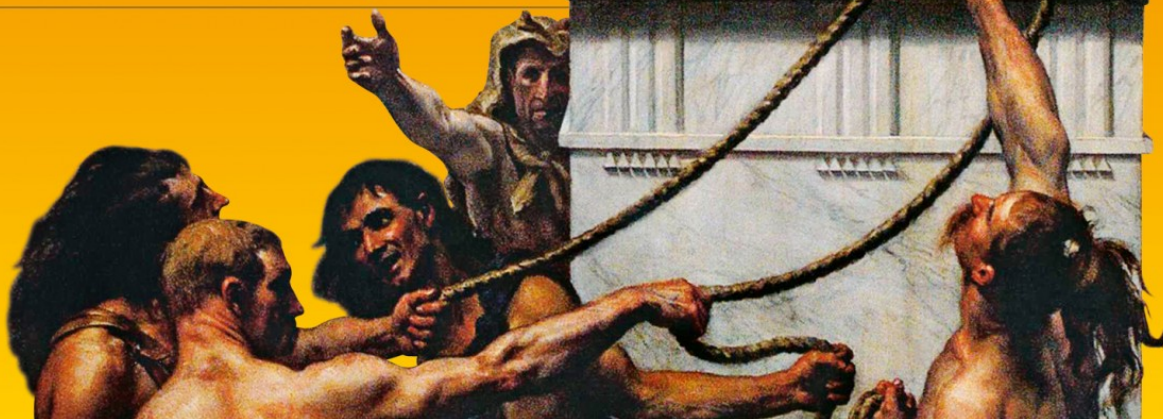
December 2020
Vol 70 Issue 12
£5.80

HISTORY TODAY

Professional pioneer:
the Wild West's
medicine woman

A realm on the rocks:
England's greatest
royal tragedy

Downfall The Goths take Rome



VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

A HOLY TRINITY

A walk through the City of London provides chance encounters with its deep history.

Paul Lay



With travel restricted and holidays on hold, many will have explored their localities anew during lockdown. Lucky are those with access to rural expanse, though urbanites can find rewards, too, in cityscapes altered, for better and worse, by the pandemic.

The City of London has long been a walker's delight, with its quirky medieval street patterns revealing hidden treasures at every corner. Normally, such outings are confined to weekends, when the City's manic energies are switched off. Now that every day is like Sunday, there is more time to reflect on a history dating back to Roman times.

My last wander through the City threw up a juxtaposition to savour. I had gone to look at St Katherine Cree, rebuilt in 1628 and consecrated in 1631 by the then Bishop of London, William Laud. Those dates are significant: in 1629, Charles I's Personal Rule began, the king ruling without Parliament. Laud became his principal ally in the Church of England and his future Archbishop of Canterbury. The 'catholic' ritual of his services there, his 'bowings and scrapings', were lethally held against him by a Puritan Parliament in 1645.

At the other end of Creechurch Lane is a small plaque one might miss. It reads: 'Site of First Synagogue After the Resettlement 1657-1701.' England's first Jewish community since the 13th century was given this site of worship by John Sadler, Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, to whom the land belonged. Sadler was a Hebraist who argued for the return of Jews to Britain, believing their conversion would herald the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. Oliver Cromwell, who had been the enemy of Laud and his king, employed Sadler as his secretary when he was Lord Protector and took a similar view on Jewish resettlement.

All this lies in the shadow of 30 St Mary Axe – the 'Gherkin' – and here lies a third wonder: the body of a Roman girl found during work on its foundations. She was reburied in its shade and an engraving – in clumsy English and, scholars tell me, elegant Latin – marks the site. A deep history of contention, return and rest is to be found within yards of one another.

FATHER FIGURE

A 17th-century depiction of Joseph and Jesus marks a shift in the status of the nuclear family.



Beyond the Nativity there is little in the Bible about Christ's childhood. In St Luke's Gospel there is an account of the 12-year-old's visit to a temple for Passover, where he debated with 'doctors', and nothing at all in Mark and John. The visit to the temple also marks the final appearance in any biblical text of Joseph, the 'father' of Jesus.

The quotation marks are necessary, due to several ambiguities: the Eastern Orthodox churches claim that Joseph was a widower – his first wife was a woman called Salome – who was only betrothed to Mary, Christ's mother. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, considers Mary and Joseph husband and wife, though both were held to be perpetual virgins, Christ being the product of an immaculate conception for Mary through God. Protestant churches tend to be relatively indifferent on such matters.

The very lack of any concrete information about Joseph has meant that he has been something of a blank canvas for fabulists. In St Matthew's Gospel, written around AD 80, a question is asked of Christ: 'Is this not the carpenter's son?' And it is as a carpenter that Joseph is most often depicted. The translation from the biblical Greek, however, is contentious; it could embrace all kinds of artisanal crafts and techniques, in wood, iron or stone. By the second century ad, however, thanks to the writings of early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr, who claimed that Christ himself made yokes and ploughs – a skill presumably learnt from Joseph – the trade of carpenter had stuck. If such accounts have any historical veracity, Joseph and Jesus may have run a domestic workshop in Nazareth, then a small settlement of 400 or so people. More likely, they would have worked in the nearby, hellenised city of Sepphoris.

Joseph's association with manual labour and craft has seen him identified as the patron saint of workers, as well as the island of Sicily; his is a common image in the homes of Italian-Americans, many of whom have Sicilian roots.

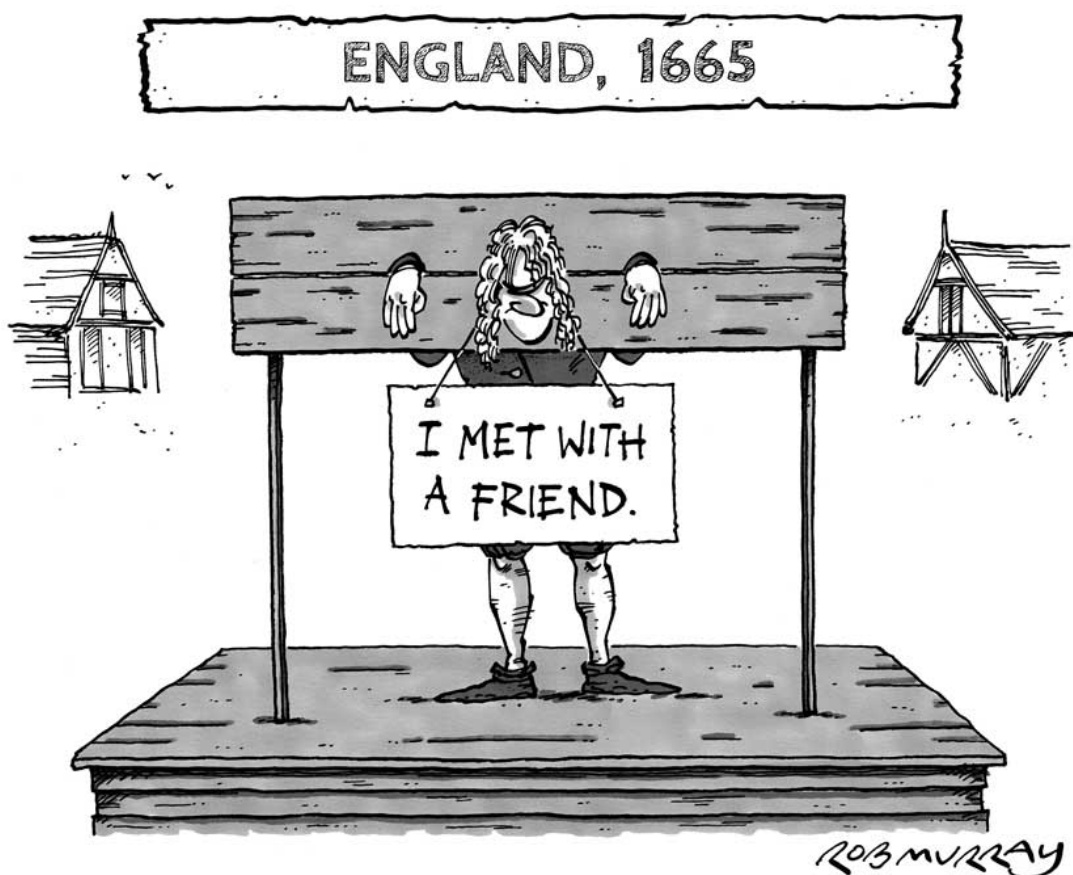
In Georges de La Tour's chiaroscuro painting, the sole source of light is the candle held by the boy Christ, whose fingernails are dirty, presumably because his are working hands. The symbolism is obvious: Christ brings light into the world.

Joseph is depicted drilling through a wooden beam and here the symbolism is darker. The tool is shaped like a cross, hinting at the fate of the adult Christ.

Painting during the 1640s, de La Tour captures a moment when the image of the saint was in a process of transformation. In the Middle Ages, a time of deep Marian devotion, Joseph tended to be represented as a marginal figure, often in the background. But during the early modern period, which saw the contest of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, there was a renewed emphasis on the importance of the nuclear family. Joseph began to play a more central role as an industrious guardian of both Jesus and Mary. Literally, a father figure.

LETTERS

Email p.lay@historytoday.com | Post to History Today, 2nd Floor, 9 Staple Inn, London WC1V 7QH, UK | Contact us on Twitter: twitter.com/historytoday



Picture Pioneer

The Glossary (November 2020) references George Cukor’s 1944 Hollywood film of Patrick Hamilton’s play *Gaslight* but fails to mention the British director Thorald Dickinson’s version of 1940. In a contemporary review, the Observer described Dickinson’s film as ‘the best English film drama of the year’.

Despite a production cost of just £39,000 compared with a lavish \$2,000,000 for the sumptuous MGM version, many see Dickinson’s as the more effective adaptation. Perhaps reported efforts by MGM to buy up the negatives and copies of the original have finally borne fruit in the frequent citations to Cukor’s version and far fewer to Dickinson’s: I suppose the presence of Ingrid Bergman among the cast list also helps. Dickinson was eventually invited to Hollywood by the producer David O. Selznick, but he turned down the offer, becoming Britain’s first professor of film, as well as head of film at the United Nations.

Dickinson was a man ahead of his time. He introduced British audiences to the revolutionary Soviet cinema of Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, while his 1946 film, *Men of Two Worlds*, was a pioneering attempt to ‘tell an African story from the point of view of an African’. No less a figure than Martin Scorsese judged him to be a ‘uniquely, intelligent, passionate artist’. The time is long overdue for him and his work to receive the attention they deserve.

Dave Hayward
Kenilworth, Warwickshire

Distortions and Omissions

In *Behind the Times* (November) Bill Hayton argues that ‘looking back more than a century later, we can see how much of Liang’s version of the past – including his distortions and omissions – still feature in contemporary history writing about China’. This is true not only about China, but also of Africa and the history of Black peoples in Britain, whose government still refuses to release documents about Black political activists present in the UK during the 20th century.

Marika Sherwood
Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London

Facts Overturned

In response to Bain Attwood’s article, ‘Captain Cook’s Contested Claim’ (August), I wonder if it is too much to expect historians to stick to the facts as best they can be ascertained. The history of the occupation of Australia by Europeans is well known, as is the fact of the States having been established and the subsequent formation of the Federation. Why try and overturn these established facts by speculating on Captain Cook? Is there no end to the list of human endeavour which is now fully weaponised to further a political agenda?

Jacob Jonker
Auckland, New Zealand

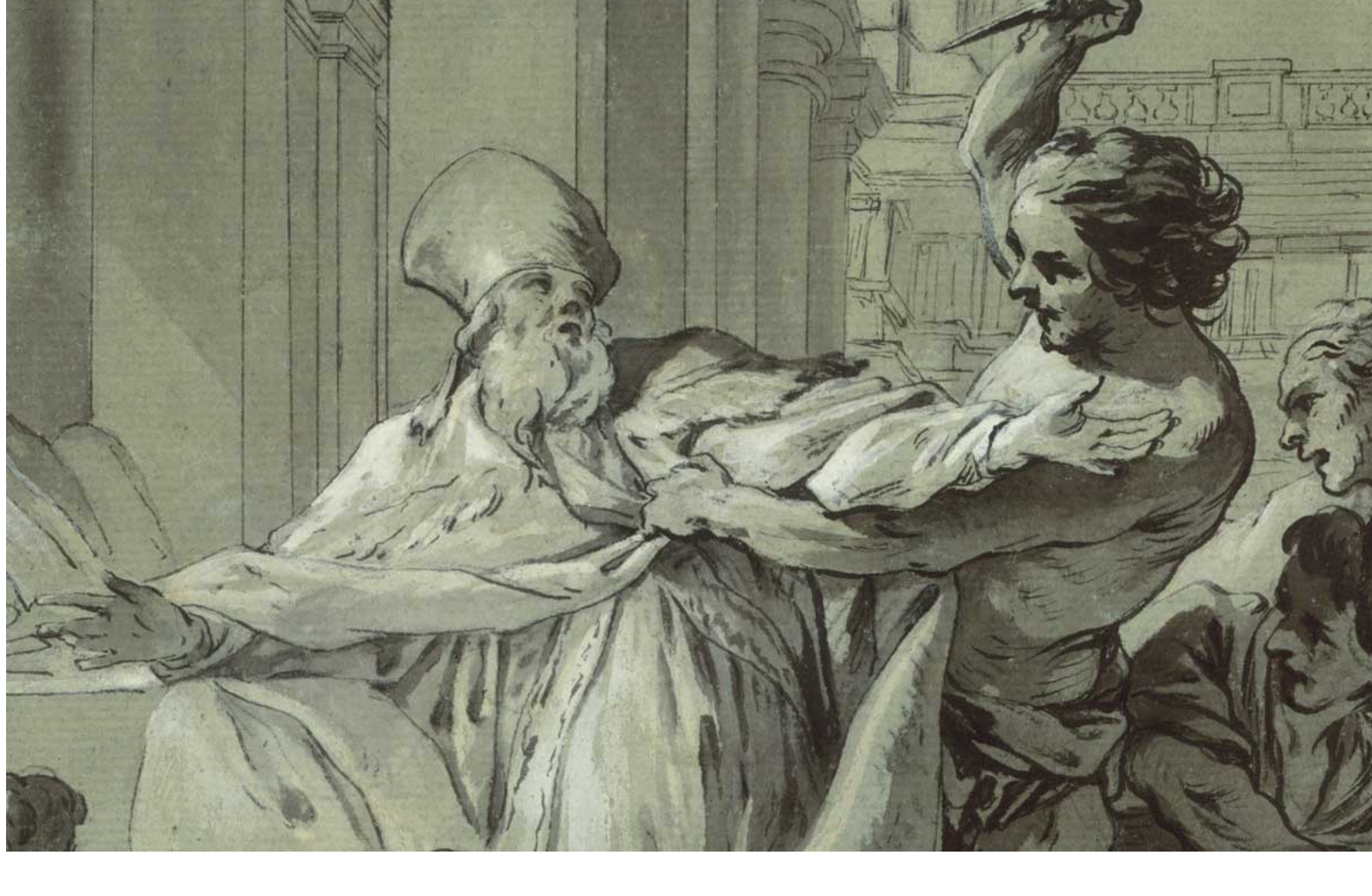
Angels on the Other Side

Maria Ogborn’s article on the Angel of Mons (*History Matters*, October), was fascinating but I did wonder if such myths had their German counterparts.

Charlotte Mobey
Newcastle upon Tyne

WAS THOMAS BECKET A SAINT OR AN ARROGANT TROUBLEMAKER?

We ask four historians to consider the reputation of Henry II's Archbishop of Canterbury, who was murdered 850 years ago this month.



‘Medieval sanctity was usually not equivalent to a life of cherubic sweetness’

Rachel Koopmans, Associate Professor of History, York University, Toronto

A saint? Yes. Citizens of Canterbury began mopping up Thomas Becket's blood as martyr's relics almost before his body was cold. Within five years of his death, Becket was considered to be a saint by virtually everyone. Even his arch-enemies came around. Henry II believed that Becket miraculously fought on his side and saved his kingdom from rebellion in 1174. Gilbert Foliot, the Bishop of London, hated Becket, in part because he thought he should have been archbishop, but he too later believed that Becket had performed a miracle for him. Becket was not just a saint: he was one of the great medieval saints, drawing in pilgrims from across Latin Christendom. Lollard heretics, who rejected sanctity wholesale, were some of the very few who dissented, speaking of Becket as 'Thomas of Cankerbury'.

An arrogant troublemaker? Also yes. Becket got into trouble time and again by stating that he accepted the terms of an agreement 'saving the privileges of my order', or 'saving the honour of God'. This was equivalent to saying 'sure, I'll do it, unless I think God would want me to do otherwise' and wrecked peace deal after peace deal. One of Becket's own household mocked him with this phrase, loudly telling his stumbling horse that it needed to keep going, 'saving the honour of God'. Becket reproved the man, but there's no question that even Becket's friends and supporters sighed over his pig-headedness.

Medieval sanctity was usually not equivalent to a life of cherubic sweetness. If Becket had not been an arrogant troublemaker, he wouldn't have found himself in such a difficult position with the king. If he hadn't insulted and fought with the knights on the day of his death, he probably would not have died. In the eyes of his contemporaries, what made him a saint was his willingness to die in defence of the church's privileges, his death in the cathedral (which many compared to the passion of Christ) and then, to them the irrefutable proof, news of his miracles. Attested to even by his enemies, the miracles sealed the case for Becket's sanctity.

‘No one imagined he would have become a saint if he hadn't been brutally murdered’

John Guy, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge and author of Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel, Victim (Allen Lane, 2012)

Thomas Becket was no saint, and he knew it. When, in 1162, Henry II bluntly ordered him to combine the roles of chancellor and archbishop, Becket answered incredulously: 'How religious, how saintly is the man you would appoint to that holy see?' He guessed the plan could tax his loyalty, but the king remained insistent.

Becket never lacked for critics. His resignation of the chancellorship without consulting Henry smacked of arrogance. In 1164, at Clarendon, he promised to adhere to what the king called the 'ancestral customs', only to renege when Henry produced a written text. Becket had been naive: it didn't occur to him to demand that the 'customs' be declared in full before he promised to observe them. He was tricked into believing that verbal assent would suffice. His jealous rival for the archbishopric, Gilbert Foliot, said of him: 'He always was a fool and always will be.' In 1166, Foliot sent him a broadside, calling him rash, brash and supercilious, a troublemaker who allowed his obsessions to run riot.

Becket could act impulsively in his attempts to force matters to a head. He had two opportunities to settle the quarrel in 1169 when, instead of ratifying the terms he had previously agreed, an ascetic, rebel's instinct kicked in at the last moment. No one imagined he would have become a saint if he hadn't been brutally murdered. In his defence, the pope had ordered him: 'Humble yourself before the king as far as it can be done, but do not agree to anything which leads to the diminution of your office and the Church's liberty.'

John of Salisbury, the friend who knew Becket best, gives us as true a verdict as we are ever likely to have. Becket was a divided consciousness, keenly aware that one day he could no longer go on vacillating between self-assertion and dishonest compliance.

Opinion tends to be shaped by circumstances. In 1520, Henry VIII regarded Becket as a revered saint and took Emperor Charles V with him to kneel at his shrine. Some years later, he denounced Becket as a traitor to his king. What had changed? Henry had broken with Rome.

‘The canonisation and subsequent cult were defined by the manner of his death’

Anne J. Duggan, Author of Thomas Becket (Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), Emeritus Professor of Medieval History and fellow of King's College, London

It all depends on the perspective. Although Becket's biographers emphasised signs of sanctity in his earlier life, the canonisation and subsequent cult were defined by the manner of his death in defence of ecclesiastical rights, which became encapsulated in the slogan 'freedom of the Church' (*libertas ecclesie*). Without the violent and bloody murder in the cathedral on 29 December 1170, it is unlikely that Becket would have been canonised. Without the relevance of his struggle to contemporary church-state relations across Europe, his cult would not have enjoyed the extraordinary success that saw him recognised before 1200 as a clerical icon across the whole of Latin Christendom, from Trondheim (Norway) to Monreale (Sicily) and from Tomar (Portugal) to Sulejów (Poland). Becket's heroic resistance to Henry II's attempt to curtail freedom of election, ecclesiastical jurisdiction over clerics in criminal and some civil actions and the right of appeal from English episcopal courts to the papal court, gave encouragement to other prelates confronted by similar challenges. Read from the perspective of 21st-century realities, however, where, generally speaking, the nation state enjoys legal sovereignty, Becket's resistance to such policies looks like arrogant obstruction of the legitimate rights of the crown to govern the realm of England; but such a conclusion is defensible only by reading history backwards.

Henry II was no constitutional monarch. He ruled as much by force and fear as by lawful process and his imposition of his chancellor as Archbishop of Canterbury was part of a plan to add control of the English Church to his political armoury. Becket's resignation of the chancery and refusal to play the king's game led directly to the mockery of a 'trial' at Northampton in 1164, his denunciation as traitor and, ultimately, to his murder. The four barons who attacked him claimed they were acting on a royal mandate that sanctioned his arrest and transfer to Normandy, but their armed pursuit of the archbishop into the sacred precincts of the cathedral, followed by the brutal murder of the English primate, had no justification. No law sanctioned such outrageous sacrilege.

‘Henry II had a genius for alienating those closest to him’

Hugh M. Thomas, Professor of History at the University of Miami

Thomas Becket became a canonised saint because he was a troublemaker: little else qualified him for that role. The medieval church took many uncompromising stances, at least in theory, and it is hard to know how an ecclesiastical authority could have satisfied all the theoretical demands of office without being a troublemaker. Take a key issue in Becket's clash with Henry II: the proper punishment of clerics who committed crimes, especially violent ones that traditionally warranted harsh physical punishments, including execution. The clergy strongly supported such punishments for laypeople and acknowledged that priests and other clerics sometimes committed heinous crimes, but insisted that preserving the untouched sacral status of the clerical body was so important that clerics should be exempt from physical penalties. Since views about the sacred character of the clerical body also served as the foundation for demanding celibacy, this was not simply a self-serving stance, but it met with little sympathy from the laity. Henry offered a compromise whereby defrocking preceded physical punishment, which many found reasonable, but for purists like Becket this was an unacceptable legal dodge.

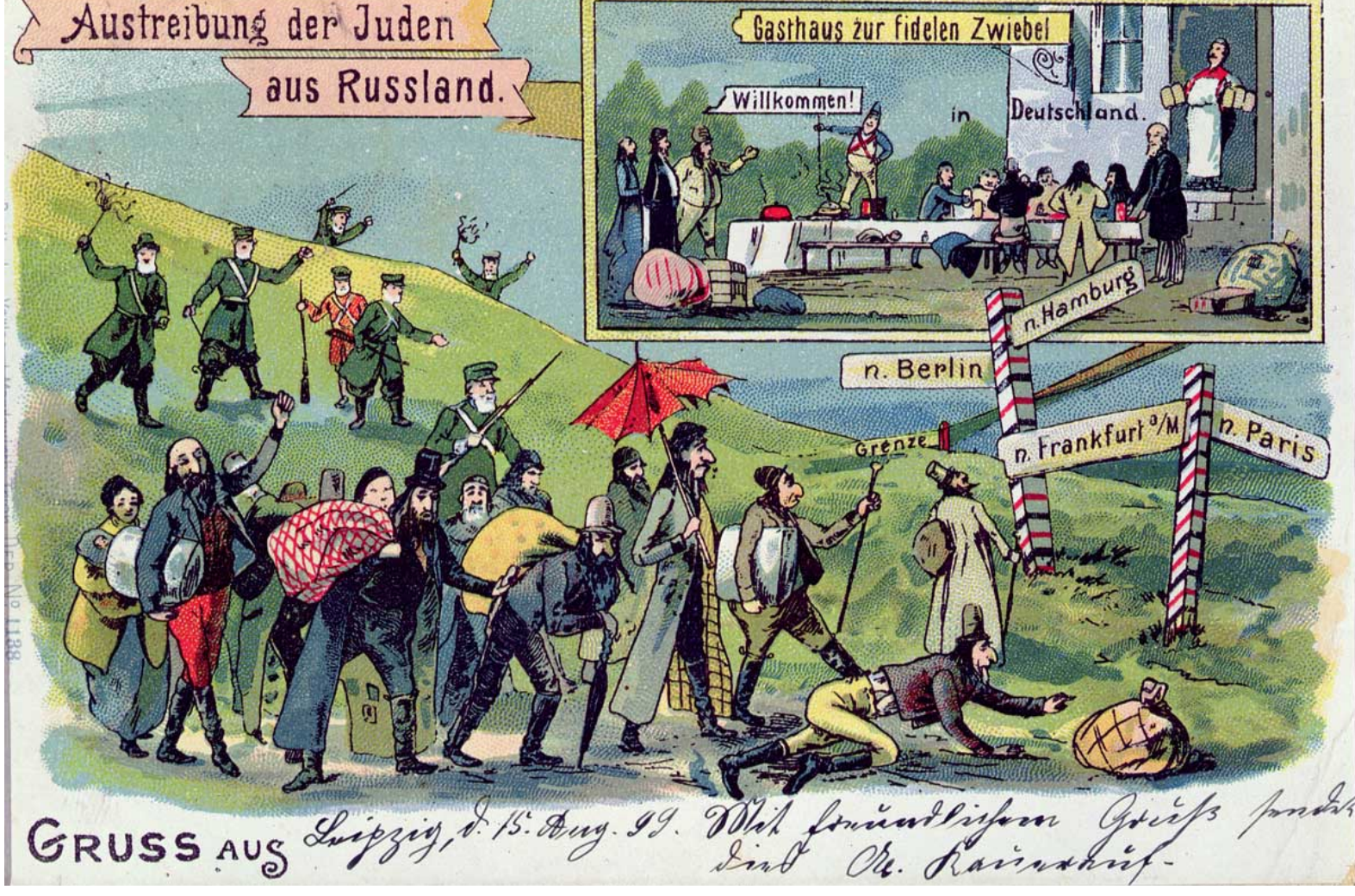
So Becket was a troublemaker. But was he an arrogant one? In practice, ecclesiastical authorities constantly compromised on various issues to function in the world. For Henry and his supporters, including some bishops, Becket's unwillingness to do so made him arrogant, especially given his status as an 'upstart' son of a merchant who owed his rise to the king.

Was Becket's unwillingness to compromise the sole cause of the disastrous outcome of the feud? Maybe not. Henry II had a genius for alienating those closest to him: one of his brothers, his wife and three of his sons led revolts against him. Henry was not the sole source of family strife, but the pattern is suggestive of an unusually difficult personality. Henry used confrontations, proxy violence and threats, all admittedly standard tactics in the period for powerful people, to bully Becket into submission and, though this worked initially, it ultimately failed spectacularly. For many contemporaries, most importantly the pope, Becket's troublemaking and subsequent embrace of martyrdom marked him as a saint.

WHEN THEY GET TO THE BORDER

The Aliens Act of 1905 was the culmination of decades of anxiety about migrants – some of whom attempted to reach Britain by clandestine means.

Hannah Ewence



A breathless account of a furtive and perilous border crossing appeared in 1905 in a Hebrew-language literary journal published in Warsaw. Its author, Yosef Haim Brenner, was an aspiring writer and intellectual, self-educated in Russian literature, philosophy and the social sciences. He was also in flight from the Russian army, having deserted his post and fled across the border with Prussia by stealth, arriving eventually in the crowded throng of London’s East End.

His journey from the Russian town of Oryol had been a long and arduous one, undertaken by railway, horse and cart and then on foot. His ordeal only truly began, however, after arriving in the border town of Strodoz. There he, together with two other men, hid anxiously and in fear for their lives for several days until a ‘runner’ could be found to smuggle them across. ‘Our hearts were pounding’, Brenner recalled:

The word ‘border’ jangled our nerves ... And the word ‘disaster’ kept droning away in our minds ... We lay down to rest; perhaps we would feel better, perhaps the day would pass, but we couldn’t settle. We couldn’t leave the place and there was nowhere else to go. Not much longer to that great and terrible hour: the time to cross the border.

At the height of the great East to West migration of the long 19th century, clandestine journeys were far from uncommon. For those, like Brenner, hoping to leave the Russian Empire, complex and convoluted bureaucratic hurdles lay before them which often required both wealth and connections to overcome. Russian Jews rarely possessed either of these things, forced instead to place their faith and pass their fate into the hands of the network of agents, smugglers and ‘runners’ ready to assist their departure – at a price. Once safely across, a migrant’s troubles were far from over. In an age before passports were a requirement for entry, nations still fiercely guarded their borders against ‘undesirables’. By the close of the 19th century, increasingly draconian ‘anti-alien’ legislation formed ever-thicker paper walls against the poor, the unskilled and the ‘diseased’.

In Britain, more liberal than most European nations, the battle lines over the entry of ‘aliens’ had been drawn and redrawn as the 19th century drew to a close, especially after Jewish immigration into the country picked up apace after 1881. The assassination of Tsar Alexander II (and the revelation of one Jew’s involvement in the plot) sparked widespread pogroms, accelerating the decision of many Jews to seek better prospects in the West. While some regarded fleeing Jews with great sympathy, others saw their unchecked entry as an unmitigated threat to Britain’s sovereignty as a powerful island nation. ‘England will be flooded ... if things take not a different turn’, warned the *Pall Mall Gazette* in early 1882. Staunch anti-alienists, such as William H. Wilkins, the private secretary to the Earl of Dunraven, went further still, declaring in-bound migration an ‘invasion’. In his view, Jews leaving the Russian Pale should be regarded with great suspicion. These were a people, Wilkins cautioned, prepared to ‘resort to many subterfuges’ to get across the border. What ‘class’ of citizens such duplicitous individuals would make, he inferred, was anyone’s guess.

This rhetoric assumed a new resonance after an outbreak of cholera in 1892. The disease’s rapid march across the Continent and its subsequent transmission to North America via trans-Atlantic shipping was attributed – largely incorrectly – to migrants travelling westwards. Unsurprisingly, the perceived potential for these travellers to ‘pollute’ the spaces through which they passed and to ‘infect’ the people they came into contact with heightened the sense of suspicion that surrounded them. Despite the attempts of the German authorities to set up control stations, transit centres and quarantine facilities to ‘sift’, ‘filter’ and, if necessary, ‘exclude’ diseased migrants, some British watchers remained wary. ‘Those that are passed by the inspectors ... get a card marked with a red cross, and their baggage is similarly marked, and then ... farther they go’, recounted one British journalist upon witnessing the controls in place at the Russia-Prussia border. ‘Many, however, slip through ... who can say how many escape the control altogether?’

In reality, evading the control stations along the Russian frontier or those positioned to intercept migrants once they neared the ports of embarkation was both difficult and disadvantageous. Doing so would leave migrants exposed to the advances of unscrupulous agents, to arrest by German police or rejection by the shipping lines. Yet presenting the control system as flimsy, porous and poorly managed played into the hands of those agitating for restriction. It presented Britain as the victim of continental incompetence to curb the spread of the disease.

Geopolitics also played its part in the fears and anxieties which surrounded ‘suspect’ migrants. While control stations – if properly managed – acted as one line of defence against the diseased, ‘what is there to prevent the Russian Government from conveying them by steamship from its own ports?’ asked one London newspaper at the height of the crisis. Relations looking west were little better. The United States 1891 Immigration Act had awarded far greater powers to officials at New York’s Ellis Island to reject migrants if they did not meet the required standards of health, wealth and ‘morality’. This thrust ‘sub-standard’ migrants back into the European system, or deterred them from attempting the Atlantic crossing altogether. In the more sensationalist claims, this ‘division’ of humanity at transit centres such as Hamburg’s *Auswandererhallen* into the racially ‘fit’ and the racially ‘degenerate’, could mark the racial profile and material prosperity of receiving nations for generations. ‘Clean, sturdy, open-faced, sweet creatures; these for America and Canada – to work in the fields, to work in the factories, with their strong arms’, claimed one report, after sighting the centre’s inhabitants. ‘Filthy, rickety jetsam of humanity, bearing on their evil faces the stigmata of every physical and moral degeneration ... These are for England.’

Given the stringency of control measures in place at the *Auswandererhallen* and other portside facilities, it is unlikely that truly unwell, or even simply ‘unclean’ migrants would have been allowed to travel to Britain without first undergoing treatment. Nonetheless, the suggestion of illicit behaviour and the contravention of regulations by migrants was enough to stoke the fires for immigration restriction. In January 1905 the Aliens Act, which severely curbed the entry of ‘foreigners’ to Britain, passed into law. In targeting criminals, the diseased and those without the means to ‘decently’ support themselves, it singled out those migrants most in need of clandestine routes of departure and covert means of travel. The spotlight shone on such journeys by scaremongers, devoted restrictionists and those with genuine concern for British sovereignty no doubt played its part in the passage of the act.

Hannah Ewence is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Chester. Her most recent book is *The Alien Jew in the British Imagination, 1881-1905* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

ILLUMINATING CONSPIRACY

Demonology is a long-established if little known political tradition in the United States.

S. Jonathon O'Donnell



New Haven, Connecticut, 4 July 1798. The President of Yale, Timothy Dwight, announces the name of an apocalyptic and conspiratorial threat facing America. Referencing the Book of Revelation, he declared that the end was close, the Antichrist was abroad in the land and agents of a conspiracy were filling the nation with impious people and false prophets. The conspiracy, he proclaimed, had already ravaged the Old World, unleashing the forces of atheism, enlightenment and revolution, and was in the process of extending its influence across the Atlantic. The spiritual and political order of the nation, of Christian civilisation itself, was at stake. And the greatest threat to its survival, Dwight declared with certainty, was the Order of the Illuminati.

Today the name ‘Illuminati’ conjures images of imagined threats and spurious connections played out with corkboard and string. Yet the Illuminati scare of the late 18th century is among the earliest, most paradigmatic examples of American cultural demonologies. Dwight was far from alone in his concerns. Earlier that year the Reverend Jedidiah Morse uttered similar proclamations from his Boston pulpit, calling ‘the Illuminated’ fomenters of revolution, advocates of sexual promiscuity and enemies of both patriotism and private property. Other Federalist preachers and publications followed suit. Narratives of Illuminati infiltrators exacerbated an existing atmosphere of partisan crisis generated by the threat of war with France in 1797.

Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans, opponents of John Adams’ incumbent Federalist party, were the primary targets of accusations of conspiracy, cast as Illuminati agents seeking to cause the moral and spiritual collapse of the nation.

It was with the Alien and Sedition Acts (1798-1801), however, that the most direct ramifications were felt. The French Revolution and its aftermath led to a fresh wave of immigrants, who became ripe targets for claims of subversion. Irish and French immigrants – many of the latter being, ironically, aristocrats displaced by the Revolution – became framed as Jacobin sympathisers, bringers of a threatening atheist Illuminism. Some were tried and convicted. For Federalist preachers, such as Morse, the Devil was abroad and his legions were comprised of Republicans, immigrants and the opposition press. Political critique was repackaged as sedition.

The path the Order of the Illuminati took from a small Bavarian college town secret society to the archetype of global occult conspiracy is an odd one. Established on 1 May 1776 in Ingolstadt with just five members, the Order was similar to other Enlightenment utopian ventures of the day, formed ostensibly for the purposes of eliminating superstition, promoting freedom and perfecting the human race. This did not sit well with conservative Catholics in the region and the Order was suppressed in 1785. Yet its shadow was long. As revolutionary fervour spread across Europe, rumours of its survival – and success – spread. By 1794 conservative writers were already presenting the Illuminati as the hidden hand behind the French Revolution.

The 1797 publication of the University of Edinburgh professor John Robison’s *Proofs of Conspiracy* and the *Memoires pour servir a l’histoire du Jacobinisme* by the former Jesuit priest Augustin de Barruel returned the Order firmly to prominence. The authors framed the Illuminati as not simply surviving, but as the secret force behind an international conspiracy to overthrow civil government and organised religion; one that had succeeded in Europe and was taking root in the United States. For Barruel, the Illuminati were the central pillar of a ‘triple conspiracy against God, the King and Society’. Both works circulated widely in New England and the sermons of Morse and Dwight drew on them, with Robison’s academic credentials being used to shield his claims from critique. Still, however, claims of the Illuminati threat began to falter under the burden of evidence. Although many Federalist clerics remained convinced of a diabolic plot, by 1799 fervour about the conspiracy was already waning.

Contrary to the prophetic declarations of conservative clerics, Jefferson’s election did not inaugurate Armageddon, though it did bring a series of quick reversals. Jefferson pardoned those convicted under the Acts and allowed the legislation to expire. Many people tarnished by the conspiracy waged a successful counterattack in the press, mocking and discrediting its promoters. In some ways, normality had returned. But the blend of apocalyptic speculation and political scapegoating and suppression that was behind the Illuminati scare revealed a pattern that has recurred throughout American history.

The Illuminati were not merely a political threat but a spiritual one, a threat to the Christian fabric of the nation. Demonology and conspiracy have long been bedfellows. The witch hunts of early modern Europe, given American expression a century before the Illuminati scare in Salem, Massachusetts, also imagined a shadowy plot of demonically guided dissidents seeking to subvert Christendom.

These conspiracies left their mark on Christian anti-internationalism in the US. When President Woodrow Wilson tried to raise support for the League of Nations, conservative preachers cast such internationalism as a harbinger of the Antichrist’s global empire. Contemporary narratives of a threatening ‘globalism’ undermining US sovereignty follow suit, drawing directly on the apocalyptic prophesying of 1990s televangelists, such as Pat Robertson. Yet it is for the groups that have been cast as both symbols and symptoms of internationalist plots that the scare’s mark is darkest: on the victims of the anti-Catholic and anti-Mormon movements of the 1820s and 1830s, the antisemitism of the early 20th century, the 1950s red scare and Islamophobic conspiracies of the post-9/11 era.

As with the European witch hunts, in both the Illuminati panic and its later echoes, the real threat came from the counterconspiracy rather than from any conspiracy itself. Imagining themselves at risk of dark powers, Federalist preachers and the press organised in opposition to those powers. The immediate result was a threat not just to those it targeted but to free speech. While this threat passed, the moment left scars that have not faded as readily. As one of the earliest incidents in America’s long history of political invocations of the demonic, the Illuminati scare warns that the danger of demonology is not the demon, but the demonologist who imagines demons to be fought.

S. Jonathon O'Donnell is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Clinton Institute for American Studies, University College Dublin.

AFTER ME, CONQUEST

Edward the Confessor, a model of medieval piety, was a surprisingly effective ruler.

David Woodman



Godwine, a man who had risen to become Earl of Wessex during the reign of Cnut (d. 1035), sailed up the Thames in 1052. Having paused in Southwark to recruit Londoners, Godwine took advantage of a rising tide to continue upriver, his ships sticking to the southern bank. After his exile from England the year before, Godwine's aim was clear: to threaten Edward the Confessor with war so that he (and his children) could be restored to their former positions of power.

This is the story as told in two versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, an annual record of events. A third version of the *Chronicle* offers a rather different account. Rather than concentrating on Godwine's military forces and aggressive tactics, it says that he and his son, Harold, 'sent to the king and asked him legally to return to them all those things of which they had been unjustly deprived'. Edward is depicted as being reluctant to give any response, leaving Godwine's men so angry that they wanted to attack the king. It was only through great effort that Godwine was able to calm his men and prevent them from advancing against Edward.

The differences are striking. In this version of the story, Godwine is much less hostile towards Edward than in the first. In fact, this version of the *Chronicle* is noticeably more favourable towards the Godwine family than are the other versions. The *Chronicle* constitutes a major source for early medieval English history. It survives in seven principal manuscript versions, produced in different places around the country, each with its own bias and agenda. But the accounts of the 1051-52 crisis are remarkable not only in the extent and tone of their differences, but also in the high level of detail that they contain. These facts alone demonstrate that this moment was considered extraordinary by contemporary chroniclers. They also take us to the heart of the politics of the mid-11th century and the major conflict that was taking place between Edward and the most powerful secular family in the land, the Godwines.

The conflict had been long in the making. When he became king in 1042, Edward was returning from some 25 years in exile in Normandy and needed quickly to cultivate support. Godwine was the highest-ranking secular official, making him a vital ally, and the king made many attempts to gain his allegiance. By 1045 Edward had married Godwine's daughter, Edith, and two of Godwine's sons, Swein and Harold, had been granted earldoms.

The relationship between Edward and the Godwines, however, had a fraught history. In 1036 Edward and his brother, Alfred, had attempted to return to political life in England from their exile. While Edward was forced to retreat back to the Continent, Alfred was at first welcomed by Godwine. But the earl subsequently betrayed Alfred by handing him over to the then king, Harold Harefoot. Alfred was tortured and blinded and later died of his wounds.

By the late 1040s Edward was feeling sufficiently secure in his own position as king that he was beginning to explore other options, including favouring a new group of supporters, many of whom were Norman, over the Godwines. The nadir of the relationship between Edward and the Godwines was reached in 1051 and would lead to the exile of Godwine and his sons. Contemporary sources describe two events in particular that sparked a crisis, and one of these, its consequences and its aftermath are described in surviving versions of the *Chronicle*.

This event was the arrival of Count Eustace II of Boulogne, Edward's brother-in-law, in Dover in 1051, where his men, in trying to find lodgings in the town, got into a fight with the locals, resulting in deaths on both sides. Since Dover was within Godwine's control, Eustace's presence constituted a personal threat to him. As Eustace was related to Edward and subsequently sought his protection, it was natural that contemporaries would view them as allies. The two versions of the *Chronicle* that describe this episode are sufficiently different in their accounts that it is impossible to recreate precisely what happened and for what reasons. One version has Godwine and his sons mustering armies to threaten Edward, unless Eustace were surrendered to them; in the other, Godwine is depicted less as an aggressor against the king than acting nobly to protect his people in Dover.

The differences are irreconcilable. But the outcome of the crisis was clear and agreed: Godwine and his sons were outlawed and exiled. Edith, Godwine's daughter and Edward's wife, was removed from the centre of politics by being placed in a nunnery. This was one of the most astonishing falls from grace recorded in the 11th century. One version of the *Chronicle* remarked:

It would have seemed remarkable to everyone in England if anybody had told them that it could happen, because he [Godwine] had been exalted so high, even to the point of ruling the king and all England, and his sons were earls and the king's favourites, and his daughter was married to the king.

In 1052, the very next year, Godwine and his sons sailed back to England, where, astonishingly, they were able to recover their former positions of power and Edith regained her position as queen. Godwine himself died in 1053, but his sons continued to be powerful, Harold eventually becoming king in 1066 on Edward's death. The vivid and dissenting detail of the annals for 1051-52 highlights how deeply riven were the political divisions in England. But they also indicate just how complex it must have been for Edward to maintain his position as king. He had overcome a long period of exile to become king in the first place. He then had to deal with the difficulties of establishing himself as the new ruler, without a natural base of supporters. The outlawing of the Godwines in 1051 represented an attempt at a major political coup, as Edward tried to change political direction. Although the Godwines managed to force their way back into England the next year, Edward was nevertheless able to remain on the throne until his death in January 1066. The political chaos that followed Edward's death, leading ultimately to the Norman Conquest, is testament in its own right to how well Edward had done to remain as king for almost a quarter of a century in the face of such strong political contenders.

David Woodman is Fellow in History and Senior Tutor at Robinson College, Cambridge and author of *Edward the Confessor: The Sainted King* (Penguin, 2020).

LOVE SICK

‘Crazy Jane’ was ubiquitous in the late 18th century, the archetypal figure of those driven mad by disappointed love.

Anna Jamieson



In 1796, Matthew ‘the Monk’ Lewis published a four-stanza poem telling the tragic tale of his ill-fated heroine, ‘Crazy Jane’. By 1799, Lewis’ words had been put to music and Jane’s story of heartbreak and mental collapse was shared across the country in music halls, assembly rooms and alehouses. On 1 May 1800, the *Morning Post* reported that, at ‘Mrs Methven’s Masquerade’ in Ranelagh, ‘Lord Pomfret unsexed himself in the character of Crazy Jane’. A few years later, a military fete in Horsham commemorating the victory of Trafalgar featured a ‘Crazy Jane’ among a parade of other popular characters.

Crazy Jane was by no means the only ‘love-mad’ female character popularised in the 18th century’s latter decades. Mourning the death of a lover, or abandoned after an affair gone wrong, this compelling archetype had already proliferated through a number of ‘crazy’ characters, including Maria from Lawrence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1767) and *Sentimental Journey* (1768) and Crazy Kate from William Cowper’s *The Task* (1785). Perhaps the best-known example of this is Shakespeare’s Ophelia. Pining after Prince Hamlet and mourning the death of her father, Ophelia had served as the original love-mad woman, but during these later years, the image became increasingly common.

A late 18th-century individual might have met Crazy Jane at a masquerade, read of Crazy Kate’s solitude in a periodical, seen a painting of Insane Maria at the Royal Academy of Arts, or watched a rendition of *Hamlet* with Ophelia taking centre-stage. Items including china, watchcases and pillboxes all bore their likenesses: Maria was regularly represented on Wedgwood china and, at one point, a ‘Crazy Jane Hat’ even circulated at London’s fashionable parties.

Each different interpretation of the distraught heroine shared a range of easily recognisable features. With downcast eyes, tear-stained cheeks and shabby dress, she was beautiful and melancholic, weak and unthreatening. Setting was also important: a dreary plain might show humble poverty, a stormy seascape could suggest psychic turbulence, or a bucolic wood her natural affinity with nature.

Part of her popularity was undoubtedly the ways that she appealed to the fashionable trend of sensibility. In the late 18th century, being visibly affected by the suffering of others was a way to demonstrate one’s sensitive virtue: shuddering, trembling, crying or sighing were markers of refinement. While the love-mad woman was by no means a new trope, having forerunners in Renaissance theatre and poetry, her emotional sensitivity now saw her resonate anew.

But sensibility fails to explain the scale of interest she provoked. While many scholars have dismissed her as overly sentimental – a pathetic construction of a mild melancholia that acted as a forerunner of the Victorian hysteric of the late 19th century – perhaps there were additional aspects of her character that caught the public imagination in this moment. As love-mad stories abounded across new forms of media, certain descriptions proved erotic, even dangerous. The earliest iterations of Crazy Jane, for example, alluded to sexual misbehaviour: one line of Lewis’ poem, describing Jane’s ill-fated sexual antics with her dishonest lover, Henry, read: ‘He was false, and I undone.’ Successive versions of Jane’s story only made her more transgressive. A chapbook of 1813, published by Sarah Wilkinson, described how Jane’s lover delighted her in a secluded grove, where she enjoyed the ‘seductive power of [Henry’s] tongue’. The cynical contemporary reader may have rolled their eyes in the face of earlier interpretations that framed Jane as naïve and innocent: the character had become far more sexy, dangerous, erotic and exciting. Love’s madness was not just a literary phenomenon. Medical theory in the 18th century posited that women (and occasionally men) were driven insane by disappointment in love. Asylum case notes provide plenty of examples where love’s madness was given as a cause of insanity and, subsequently, of incarceration. William Black’s *Dissertation on Insanity* (1810) placed ‘Love’ as the fifth most common cause for admission of patients to London’s Bethlem Hospital; when visiting in 1772, a French tourist, Pierre Jean Grosley, commented that ‘all the people here were here because it was occasioned either by love or religious enthusiasm’; in 1804 the artist Joseph Farington wrote in his diary that ‘a Medical man who attended Bedlam had said that the greatest number of those who were confined were women in love’.

Such sources suggest that love’s madness is a more troubling malady than it first appears – a genuine pathological condition. Madness through love was a very real threat, not just one confined to literature. For those who had experienced the throes of heartbreak first-hand, the more unnerving aspects of a love-mad heroine’s story might have provoked intensely private recollections of brushes with sorrow, or, worse, mental illness. Perhaps, then, the popularity of the trope was more about protection, rather than celebration. Acquiring an object linked to love’s madness, such as a tea-waiter decorated with Maria’s face, or a chapbook that told Jane’s story, may have proved reassuring. The threat of love’s madness, and its associations with sexuality, morality and illness, was effectively downsized, safely stowed and contained. Buying, using and then putting them away in the safety of one’s home allowed the owner to take control of love’s madness, maybe imbuing these items with strange, almost talismanic properties. And at least the owner of these products was not in as bad a state as the melancholic Maria or wretched Ophelia. At the same time, they served as objects through which the owner might contemplate their own love life, relationships or even mental health.

Be she performed, read or owned, the love-mad woman was evidently many things. While she could serve as a harmless or consoling icon of sentimentality, there is more to her appeal. She might have prompted a titillating frisson due to the more sexualised aspects of her love-mad tale, an eye roll from an incredulous spectator, wistful thoughts about a past lover or a pang of fear about one’s own mental decline. Certainly, iterations of late 18th-century love’s madness could be sweet and saccharine, alluring or provocative, or menacing and marginalised – as succinctly embodied by the beguiling, moralising and ambiguous figure of Crazy Jane.

Anna Jamieson is Associate Tutor in History of Art at Birkbeck, University of London.

A History Today subscription – erudite and thoughtful.
An illuminating magazine delivered every month.

DON'T DWELL ON YOUR PRESENT...

DWELL ON THE PAST WITH THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT



DECEMBER

This month's anniversaries.

Mathew Lyons



1 December 1083

Birth of an Imperial Historian

Anna Komnene, author of Alexiad, was born on 1 December 1083.

Few, if any, historians have been so high born as Anna Komnene, eldest daughter of Byzantine emperor Alexios I, who came into the world on 1 December 1083.

Alexios had seized the imperial throne and, on his death in 1118, Komnene herself plotted to take power instead of her brother John and to rule alongside her husband, the general Nikephoros Bryennios. It is to a later historian that we owe Komnene's words when her husband refused to back her. Nature had mistaken their sexes, she said, for he ought to have been the woman.

Banished to a convent as punishment, Komnene wrote the work for which she is most remembered. The *Alexiad* is a genre all its own, somewhere between history, hagiography and epic. It focuses on the reign of Alexios and the First Crusade, as well as the assaults on the Empire from Normans, Turks and nomadic tribes, such as the Pecheneg.

Komnene's detailed grasp of military strategy has led her authorship to be questioned, but there seems little doubt that she had access both to archival and eyewitness accounts. Moreover, the work is shot through with her personal observations.

There are sharp portraits of key protagonists, among them Robert Guiscard, with 'eyes that all but shot out sparks of fire', and Bohemond, of whom she wrote: 'Even his laugh sounded like a threat to others.'

There are intense, vivid details: Alexios one night mistook an enemy soldier for a rival general because his armour was so bright it reflected stars; a winter campaign when the snow was so deep people struggled to open their doors against its weight.

Then there is her classical learning. The eulogist who claimed her studies were clandestine – 'she made dates with her beloved grammar, just as young girls secretly gaze at their betrothed through some opening' – was surely wrong, but he captures her love of Greek culture well enough.

Above all, there is the sense of Komnene herself, shut away for 30 years, apart from her husband and family, 'overwhelmed by ... the sea of misfortunes [that] advances upon me, wave after wave'.

24 December 1818

The First performance of 'Silent Night'

A recital took place at the church of St Nicholas in Oberndorf in Salzburg, on the evening of 24 December 1818.

Silent Night, or *Stille Nacht* in its original German, is one of the best known songs in the world, but few know anything of its authors.

Its lyrics were written in 1816 by a somewhat loose-living Austrian priest named Joseph Mohr. On Christmas Eve 1818, Mohr – then at St Nicholas in Oberndorf in Salzburg – handed the words to Franz Gruber, the church's organist, and asked him to write a melody for two voices, accompanied by a guitar, for that same evening.

There is no evidence to support the myth that Gruber was inspired by the recent death of his child, nor that the song was first played on guitar because the church organ wasn't working.

The song's wider fame is happenstance. The Strassers, a family of travelling glovemakers from the Tyrol, who sang folk songs as a side line, championed it. By 1832, their performance of the carol was well known enough to be requested in the Leipzig press. Another Tyrolean singing family, the Rainers, then took it to the United States, singing it in front of Alexander Hamilton's tomb on Christmas Day 1839.

Mohr and Gruber were both by now forgotten. It wasn't until 1854 that their work was recognised. For Mohr it was too late: he died in December 1848.

3 December 1927

Release of *Putting Pants on Philip*, the first Laurel and Hardy film.

7 December 43 BC

Death of Cicero.

9 December 1868

The first traffic lights are installed, outside the Houses of Parliament.

16 December 1777

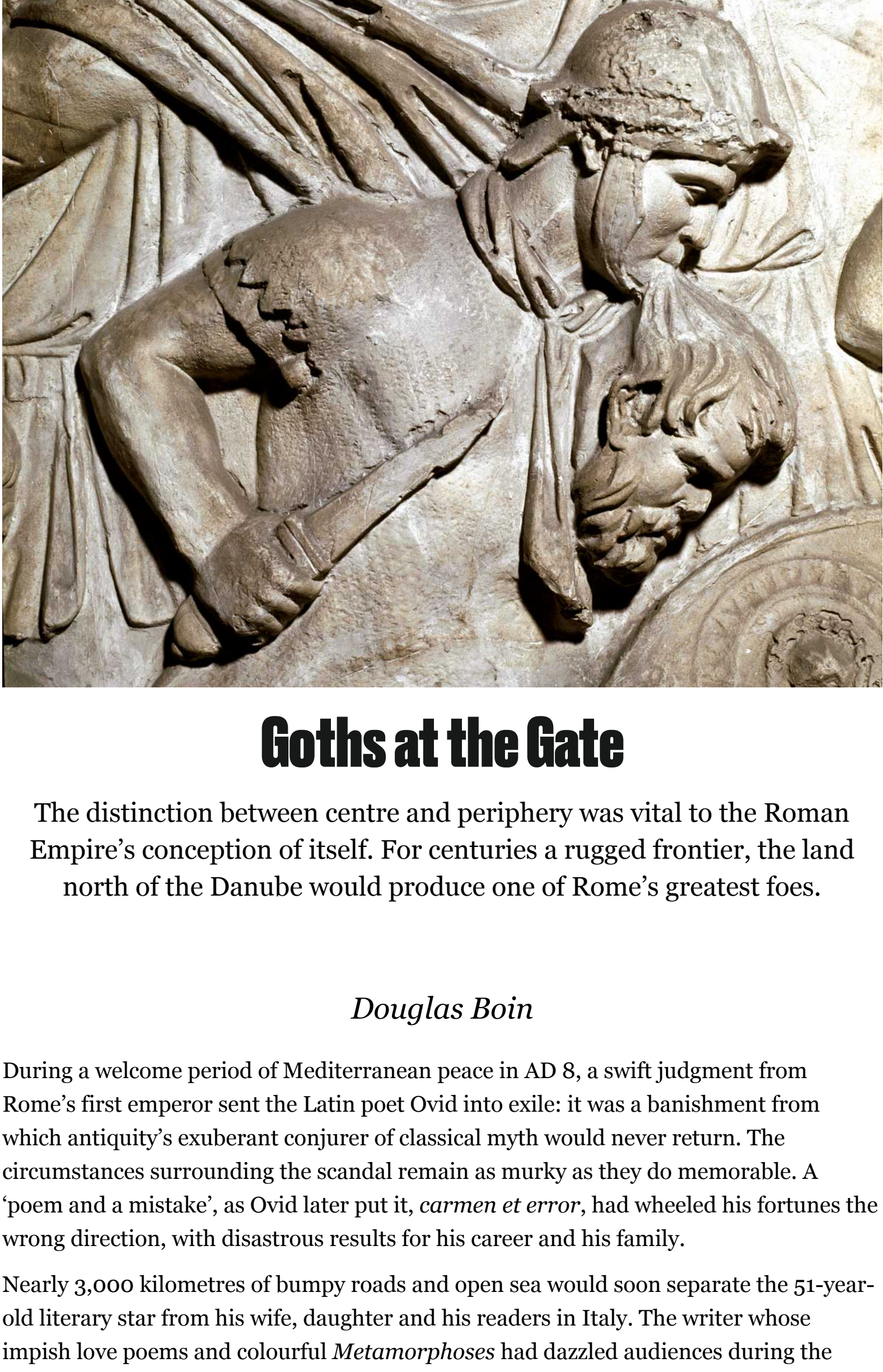
Birth of Mme Clicquot, founder of Veuve Clicquot champagne.

17 December 1790

Discovery of the Aztec sun stone in Mexico City.

25 December 800

Charlemagne is crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III.



Goths at the Gate

The distinction between centre and periphery was vital to the Roman Empire's conception of itself. For centuries a rugged frontier, the land north of the Danube would produce one of Rome's greatest foes.

Douglas Boin

During a welcome period of Mediterranean peace in AD 8, a swift judgment from Rome's first emperor sent the Latin poet Ovid into exile: it was a banishment from which antiquity's exuberant conjurer of classical myth would never return. The circumstances surrounding the scandal remain as murky as they do memorable. A 'poem and a mistake', as Ovid later put it, *carmen et error*, had wheeled his fortunes the wrong direction, with disastrous results for his career and his family.

Nearly 3,000 kilometres of bumpy roads and open sea would soon separate the 51-year-old literary star from his wife, daughter and his readers in Italy. The writer whose impish love poems and colourful *Metamorphoses* had dazzled audiences during the golden era of Augustan Rome would end his days nine years later, in AD 17, isolated and alone in the Black Sea hinterlands of Thrace.

To any self-respecting member of the Roman elite, including one of Ovid's sophistication, Thrace was not just an inhospitable destination. It existed in Roman minds at the furthest edge of what was then considered the civilised world. Geographers cautioned against taking any needless journey to the region's chilly northern reaches. Its association with well-known constellations, such as Ursa Major and *Ursa Minor*, was believed to cultivate personalities that were frigid, unwelcoming and bearish.

Lawlessness reigned. Rough men carried bows and poison-tipped arrows openly through Thrace's streets. Locals fumbled to communicate in the supposedly more cultured languages of Latin and Greek. Ovid was unsparing in his judgement. These people, he wrote in one of his many dispatches home, were nothing short of animals.

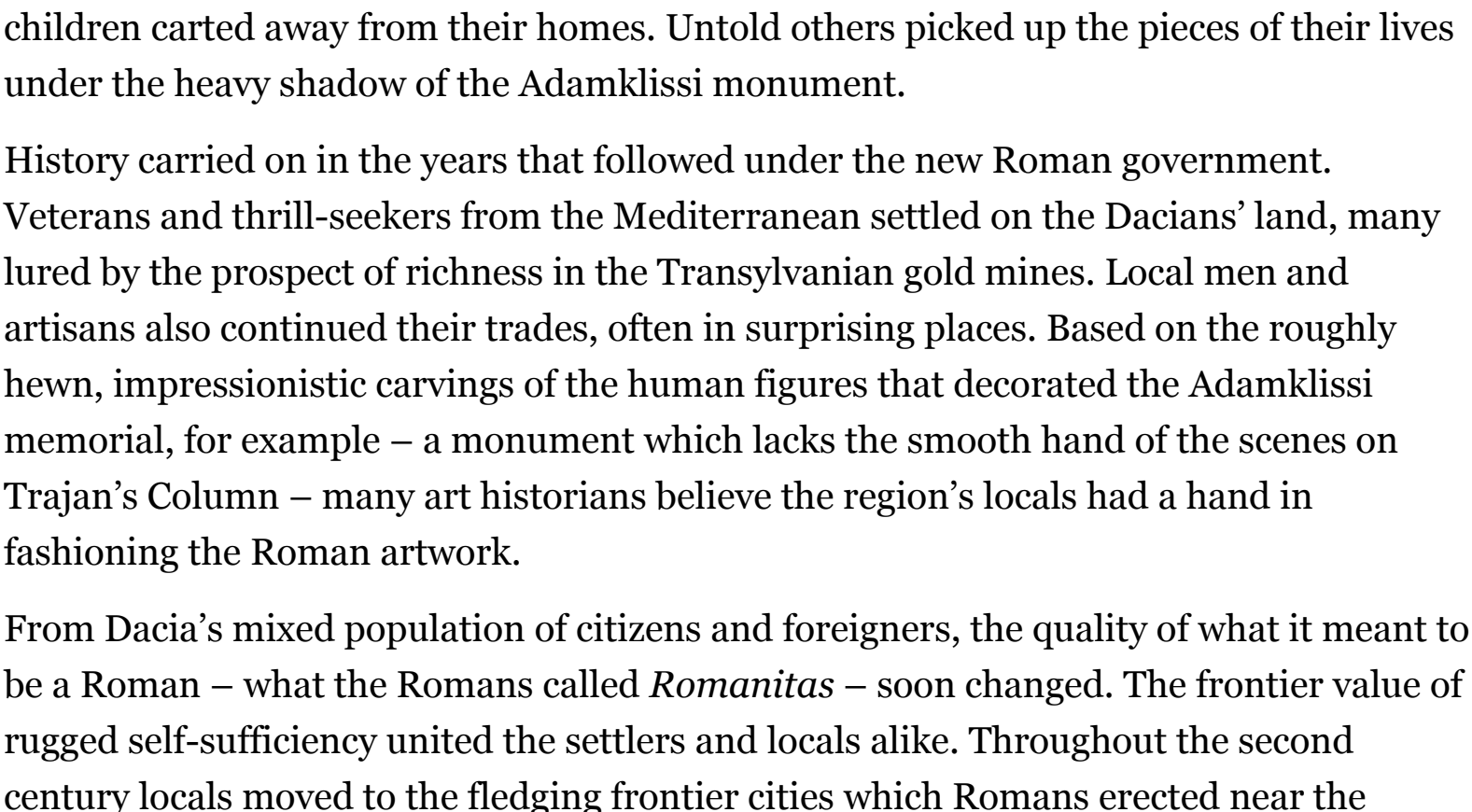
Us and them

The narrow-mindedness and contempt Ovid voiced in his letters and in his later verses, such as the *Tristia*, or *Lamentations*, composed while in exile, were sentiments shared among the Mediterranean people of his day. When a Roman soldier stood on a watchtower surveying the Danube frontier, or manned a lookout over the oases of the Arabian peninsula, or policed the walls in the upper reaches of the British Isles, he simply assumed that the tribes who lay beyond Rome's orbit were, at their core, barbaric.

Such biases speak to questionable notions of the Romans' cultural superiority. But Rome's readiness to engage in ethnic stereotyping and its citizens' casual disdain for people who lived on the periphery of the Mediterranean Sea dogged the Empire. Four centuries after Ovid, when Rome's government began to falter – a period associated with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire – the bigotry and xenophobia was even more widespread. The north-eastern border, graced by the line of the Danube, remained the epicentre of that story.

At the Thracian frontier in the first century, colonialism mixed with ethnocentrism to make life miserable for the locals, called Dacians. The situation at the border remained tense after Ovid's death and the region saw frequent outbreaks of violence and war. Romans, sensitive to the fact that hostilities might spread to their own cities and disrupt the stable lives of their citizens, responded mercilessly to the deteriorating conditions.

Two rapid military campaigns followed. From 101 to 102, then again from 105 to 106, Emperor Trajan – a capable administrator and well-regarded general – marched an army to the Danube and seized the Dacians' land. Untold number of Dacians were slaughtered in the combat. By 106, government officers in Rome were officially incorporating the annexed territory into a new province, *Dacia*.



Ostia, from Civitates Orbis Terrarum, by Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg, 1557 © Bridgeman Images.

Trajan's victory gave Roman warmongers and their artists license to manufacture the customary propaganda about foreign conquest. Expensive, larger-than-life statues of defeated Dacians were commissioned for public squares in Rome. Teams of artisans hoisted them into place in the city's new Forum of Trajan. Carved from purple-veined marble – an aesthetic choice thought by many art historians to be Rome's backhanded way of acknowledging their enemy's courage on the battlefield – the sculptures were aesthetic wonders for citizens and captives alike. Set on top of the emperor's new courthouse, the pieces joined other jingoistic displays nearby, like those of the headless Dacians depicted on Trajan's awe-inspiring new column. The emperor, flush from victory, exaggerated his own heroism by taking the celebratory Latin nickname *Dacicus*, 'victor over the Dacians'.

The treatment of foreigners on these early second-century monuments was both consistent with the Romans' penchant for self-importance and expected. For generations, musclebound statues of the Empire's fiercest enemies – Gauls, Thracians, Sarmatians, Germani, Alemanni – had populated Rome's wealthier gardens and public spaces: from the impressive marble sculpture of the Ludovisi Gaul, whose muscled arm reaches high to plunge his sword into his chiseled chest in a noble act of suicide, to the Dying Gaul, a more intimate study in the beauty of a foreign warrior's nude body. The Dacians were but the latest in a long line of conquered foes put on display to assert Roman dominance.

Such over-the-top displays came to define Trajan's Rome, whose territorial empire reached its apex in the second century. Ordinary citizens sensed the limitless possibilities of the day, as exotic spices, foreign products and enslaved people from faraway lands could be acquired for the right price. With Rome's harbour, Ostia, boasting expanded facilities to welcome ever more long-distance ships and valuable imports such as Iberian olive oil and wine regularly reaching the Roman table in these years, Rome quickly became the Mediterranean's cultural capital.

New research has upended this one-sided view of Roman history, however, as scholars have become more sensitive to the periphery, not only as a place of conquest and conflict but as one of rich, if often subtle, exchange. This slight shift in perspective has been important for appreciating how Roman customs took root in distant environs but also for how Roman customs shaped the life of ordinary individuals and local tribes away from the Mediterranean Sea. Some of these figures and groups would play a decisive role in shaping the empire's later history, too: figures such as the Goths.

At the end of the Dacian Wars, everyday life in the rolling stretch of hills and plains of eastern Europe, north of the Danube, remained grim for many locals. To judge from the evidence of a Roman victory monument erected around 107 on the battlefield at Adamklissi in Romania, the effects of the war were devastating. Panels on the monument show fallen Dacians who never returned to their families and wives and children carted away from their homes. Untold others picked up the pieces of their lives under the heavy shadow of the Adamklissi monument.

History carried on in the years that followed under the new Roman government. Veterans and thrill-seekers from the Mediterranean settled on the Dacians' land, many lured by the prospect of richness in the Transylvanian gold mines. Local men and artisans also continued their trades, often in surprising places. Based on the roughly hewn, impressionistic carvings of the human figures that decorated the Adamklissi memorial, for example – a monument which lacks the smooth hand of the scenes on Trajan's Column – many art historians believe the region's locals had a hand in fashioning the Roman artwork.

From Dacia's mixed population of citizens and foreigners, the quality of what it meant to be a Roman – what the Romans called *Romanitas* – soon changed. The frontier value of rugged self-sufficiency united the settlers and locals alike. Throughout the second century locals moved to the fledgling frontier cities which Romans erected near the mines. They traded with the colonists and, in some cases, created new extended families. By the end of the second century, Roman emperors had granted citizenship to the residents of Dacia's five most developed towns. Who looked, sounded, or counted as a Roman was markedly different than it had been at the century's start.



The Ludovisi Gaul, Roman marble copy of a third-century BC bronze statue. Jastrow, 2006/Wikimedia Creative Commons.

The ethnic, linguistic and cultural mixing that took place at Rome's north-eastern frontier was not unique to this region of its Empire. All across the Roman world, in the wake of Trajan's conquests, Rome's expanded presence created opportunity for millions of free people, the majority of whom, however, lacked Roman rights. Although they may have lived and worked in cities controlled by Roman officials or at the border of Roman-held land, these individuals could neither adjudicate their legal complaints in a Roman court of law, nor make wills to shield their personal or family wealth, nor protect themselves from being sold into slavery. They lacked what Roman jurists called *iūs italicum*, 'Italian rights', which guaranteed the resident of a Roman province the same protections afforded free people who lived on the Italian peninsula.

New Romans

With its laws applied so unevenly across three continents and yet countless thousands of men and women embracing Rome's customs and values, it is no wonder that by the third century the imbalance was ripe for reform. In one of the best known episodes of the free population of the Mediterranean. Whether one lived in Italy no longer defined whether one was a Roman citizen. Caracalla's declaration reset the balance between Rome's periphery and its centre. The most obvious change came in 235 in the guise of the first emperor to hail from the distant north-east, Maximinus.

Rome's expansion had always created opportunity for freeborn men and women and much is often made of the example of the first Roman emperors to come from outside Italy: Trajan from the Iberian peninsula, Septimius Severus from North Africa, each success a tacit declaration of Rome's spreading values. Maximinus might have earned a place in that distinguished roster if Rome's elites had not immediately opposed his rule. During his short reign from 235 to 238 senators trafficked in the customary disdain for provincial yokels. Maximinus was assassinated after only three years. His rise and fall reveals an empire at a crucial turning point in its history.

Half Alan, half Goth, Maximinus had started life as a brawny farmer's son, raised in a region, Thrace, that had never shed its reputation as a land of unlettered rustics. Dreams of an imperial coronation were, according to later Roman writers who chronicled the emperor's life, the furthest thing from the young boy's mind, too. As an adolescent, he had been drawn to wrestling. When it was announced that the Roman emperor's cavalcade was visiting his town and that there would be public wrestling contests to celebrate his arrival, Maximinus – despite struggling to communicate in Latin – signed up to participate. He won every match, impressing the emperor, Septimius Severus, who drafted him into the army. It was the break that launched Maximinus' career.

The army provided Maximinus an informal education in teamwork, engineering, geography and language. He advanced through the ranks and was eventually asked to join the emperor's bodyguard. When Septimius Severus died and his son, Caracalla, succeeded to the throne, the 30-year-old son of two non-Roman parents not only witnessed the promulgation of the emperor's citizenship decree, he benefited from it. Two decades later, with the last heirs of Caracalla's house gone, the army chose Maximinus as successor to the throne, the first man of Gothic heritage to rise to Roman emperor.



Dacian women torturing Roman prisoners, cast from Trajan's Column, 19th century © Bridgeman Images.

What should have been a moment of celebration turned into a nightmare. Reaction to Maximinus' elevation was harsh, if predictable. Traditionalists in Rome grumbled that he had secured his promotion by good fortune and refused to recognise his authority. Within three years, they had conspired to assassinate him. A full two centuries after Ovid's day, there were still many in Rome who resisted the notion that provincials might have a legitimate role in the government or a place in culture and society.

The rise of the Goths

Sometime around 270, in a surprising move that would have long-term consequences, the Roman government decided to abandon the province of Dacia.

In the rocky decades after Caracalla's universal citizenship decree, the Romans had faced a steadily deteriorating situation in the region. One emperor, Decius, died while on campaign against the Goths. Cities south of the river were raided and burned by hostile tribes. In 270 Emperor Aurelian ordered the construction of a new massive set of brick walls to protect the city of Rome. Before Aurelian's five-year reign ended, he also ordered the evacuation of Roman citizens from Dacia.

With the withdrawal of Roman forces and the abandonment of the province, whole stretches of eastern Europe returned to the local people. The mountains, marshes and grasslands became their land. Roman *Dacia* became the home of the Goths, *Gothia*.

Although it is not certain where exactly in Europe or southern Russia the Goths originated, by the end of the third century they dominated the area from the Transylvanian mountains to the Black Sea delta, as far north as the River Dnieper. Pieces of Gothic home-spun pottery, regularly found scattered throughout modern archaeological excavations across modern Romania, Moldova, Ukraine and southern Russia, confirm their widespread occupation. Everyday life was lived outdoors. Modest huts and houses cut into the local bedrock furnished protection from the elements. Women cooked around a hearth while men and boys hunted in the forests of willows and pines.

The Danube became an important boundary once again. On the Roman side, practical considerations of how to manage that border consumed Roman officials. On the Gothic side, there was the familiar push and pull of Roman culture. Some Goths enlisted in the Roman army. Many Gothic men took part in the civil war between Emperor Constantine and Licinius. In the 330s, Gothic manpower had been essential to the speedy construction of the Roman Empire's new eastern capital, Constantinople. By the middle of the fourth century, Gothic soldiers were still enlisting, dodging lions in the reeds of the Tigris and Euphrates, sent there under the command of Emperor Julian, who aimed to forge a tax-free road to the riches of Asia by conquering Persia. Julian and his soldiers failed in their mission, but Gothic veterans returned home with knowledge of the wonders of Mesopotamia and with first-hand experience of campaigns against impressively tall cities.

Just as it had for centuries, the military paid real dividends for Gothic soldiers. There were healthy stipends, an occasional bonus and a lifetime of experience gained in training and combat. But, unlike in earlier periods, there was no path to citizenship for foreign soldiers or civilians. Roman society after 212 remained strictly divided.

Roman marble busts of Emperor Maximinus (left) and Caracalla (right) © Bridgeman Images.

Gothic civilians still took advantage of their proximity to the Roman border. Gothic men, who hunted in the forests, traded animal skins and hides with Roman soldiers and residents at nearby Danube forts. Many of these, like the Roman military base at Noviodunum, were within walking distance of Gothic settlements. Over time, Gothic individuals and families themselves migrated south. Archaeologists have found traces of the Goths' distinctive, matte-orange pottery in Roman cities and contemporary writers, such as the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, document their migration during the later fourth century.

Relations at the border were frequently tense, depending on a range of factors as varied as the disposition of individual guards to the border policy of specific emperors. But the reasons why so many Goths left their home are clear enough and can be traced to two historical causes. The first was external. Invading bands of Huns from Central Asia destabilised Gothia's villages throughout the fourth century. The second was internal. Civil war among the Gothic tribes during the 360s and 370s made the future bleak for many individuals and families, who chose to seek stability by heading for Rome. Roman attempts to estimate the number of Gothic migrants and refugees in one year alone, 376, put the numbers around 200,000, though modern historians continue to debate that estimate's accuracy.

Events at the border were momentous in other ways. Emperor Valens had grown so concerned about the prospect of foreign children reaching maturity on Roman soil that he instituted a policy of separating Gothic boys from their parents, to make them more loyal to the Empire. The emperor feared a future attack against Roman citizens.

Into this culturally rich but volatile and unpredictable setting, a Gothic boy was born to two unknown parents around 370, somewhere near the Danube delta. His family named him Alaric and it is no exaggeration to say that he changed world history.

Collapse

On 24 August 410, 40-year-old Alaric the Goth crashed through the gates of the city of Rome, set fire to the symbolic heart of the Empire and instigated three days of riots, the likes of which had not been seen in Italy's most cosmopolitan city in almost 900 years. By the century's end – the date commonly cited is 476 – Rome's once-mighty empire had fallen apart.

The divestment of land came swiftly after Alaric's attack. Territories in western Europe were the first to disappear, handed over to the Goths. Portions of North Africa were soon given over to the Vandals, a tribe from northern Europe. By the end of the fifth century, Italy was governed by Gothic kings. Constantinople was the new focal point of the Roman Empire's diminished Mediterranean order.

Over the centuries, an array of causes have been cited to explain the Empire's dissolution: from lead poisoning to climate change. Some scholars insist that the Empire's surprising longevity in the east, which lasted until the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, should be seen as further testament to the enduring values of *Romanitas* and to the virtues of classical culture, which helped the Empire survive even after its western territories were lost.



The Crown Lost at Sea

The sinking of the White Ship, a vessel carrying the English king Henry I's sole heir, was a disaster from which anarchy would follow.

Charles Spencer

This year marks the 900th anniversary of the worst maritime disaster suffered by the English Crown and, arguably, by England. The tragedy of the *White Ship*, which sank on 25 November 1120 while carrying the heir to Henry I's realm across the Channel to England, was chronicled by men such as Orderic Vitalis, whose life story tells us much about the fusion of cultures that followed the Norman Conquest of 1066. He is also representative of the fear which most of his contemporaries had, of a God who chastised and punished in an Old Testament fashion.

Born in England to a French father and an English mother, Orderic Vitalis was ten years old when sent away from the village of Atcham, near Shrewsbury, to the Abbey of Saint-Evroult, in Normandy: 'Like Joseph in Egypt', he would recall of his traumatic arrival in a strange land, 'I heard a language which I did not understand.'

Orderic had been sent overseas by his priest father, Odelerius of Orleans. Odelerius was not as hard-hearted as this banishment might suggest; Orderic remembered his father sobbing as they parted. But Odelerius was convinced of the need to place religious devotion above parental affection. He believed that if his son spent his life as a monk, the boy's soul would be blessed for eternity. This seemed, to Odelerius, a spiritual investment worth decades of paternal heartache.

For Orderic Vitalis, the parting from his father in England was as agonising as it was baffling. 'I never saw him again after he sent me into exile for love of his Creator, as if I had been a rejected stepson.' Since then, he would note in old age, 'years have passed ... and during that time many changes have taken place throughout the world'. Orderic Vitalis' legacy lies in the way in which he recorded these changes for posterity. During his 57 years at Saint-Evroult he became one of the great monk-historians of the 12th century.

Henry's rise

As a result, Orderic Vitalis – who proudly referred to himself as 'Orderic the Englishman' – looked at the reign of Henry I with a keen interest. The events he recorded from late 1120 in his *Ecclesiastical History* combined elements that particularly entranced him: divine action and kingly pomp, intertwined with the reality of human frailty and topped off with stark tragedy. He was clearly aware that he would never chronicle anything else as shocking and catastrophic as the fate of the *White Ship*, when the destiny of England and Normandy was transformed in a single night.

Orderic Vitalis opened his account of this disaster with an epic sweep:

King Henry, who had now, after tremendous toil, settled affairs admirably in Normandy, decided to cross the Channel, pay generous wages to the young champions and distinguished knights who had fought hard and loyally, and raise the status of some by giving them extensive honours in England.

The fleet was to convene in Barfleur, long a preferred point of departure from Normandy to Southampton, a northward voyage that would take 10 to 12 hours in a favourable wind.

As Henry prepared to sail home to England in triumph, having spent much of the previous two decades at war with his greatest enemy, Louis VI ('the Fat') of France, he was at the pinnacle of his success. The youngest son of William the Conqueror, Henry had been in the fatal hunting party of early August 1100, when an arrow had killed his elder brother, William Rufus, the coarse and carousing soldier who had outraged many with his disregard for the church and his lustful behaviour. Henry had stolen the Crown while his brother's body wended its way through the forest, slung into the back of a cart like a felled wild boar.

A year after his coronation, Henry set about making good his power. He saw off an invasion by his eldest brother, Robert Curthose, helped by the reluctance of the barons on both sides to risk their lives and estates in battle. Henry had then laid down his uncompromising brand of royal control with ruthlessness and efficiency. He upended powerful aristocrats who fatally underestimated him and built up systems of governance that still exist today. He founded the Exchequer, to ensure the fines and taxes due to the Crown were all accounted for. At the same time, he guarded the purity of his coinage, insisting that those who compromised his currency were guilty of treason. Counterfeiters paid for their crime with the removal of their hands and genitals.

Henry relied on Roger of Salisbury to manage his royal interests. Roger was a Norman priest who Henry had met during his impoverished, itinerant youth. Roger possessed the knack of despatching the Mass with a brevity that appealed to a restless prince who was always looking for more time to hunt and fight.

Henry was also impressed by Roger's efficiency as his head of household: the priest forbade expenses that Henry, in his straitened youth, could not afford. Henry rewarded Roger for his great ability with unique powers and he was acknowledged by contemporaries as the second most powerful man in the land.

Normandy won

With England under control, Henry turned his attention to his father's ancestral land, Normandy. The Conqueror had been persuaded on his deathbed by Norman barons eager to protect their own interests, to leave the dukedom to his eldest son, Robert Curthose, despite Curthose having been in open rebellion against William for years.

Although Curthose showed great qualities as a fighting man during the First Crusade, his extravagance and lack of focus made him a wretched ruler at home: while Henry laid down order in England, Curthose's weakness resulted in bloody discord in Normandy.

Encouraged by those Normans who recognised that he might end their torment and supported by others who were seduced by his bulging war chests, Henry crossed the Channel with ever larger armies until, in 1106, he brought Curthose to battle at Tinchebrai. It proved to be a crushing victory for Henry: he captured his brother and confined him to prison for the rest of his life.



'The Death of Prince William', 19th-century English engraving © Bridgeman Images.

Possession of both England and Normandy provoked jealousy and fear among Henry's neighbours across the Channel. The most powerful of these was Louis VI, who forged alliances with the counts of Flanders and Anjou in an attempt to bring Henry down.

But Henry proved to be an intelligent diplomat and an able general. His great mistake as a statesman, though, was to leave Curthose's son, William Clito, free when he had him in his grasp as a small boy. Clito became the lightning rod for Henry's many opponents, who claimed that Clito was the rightful ruler of Normandy. In contrast, Henry's only legitimate son (he sired 22 children out of wedlock), William Ætheling, represented the king's dynastic hopes. Henry's efforts in both his realms were undertaken with William front and centre in his plans.

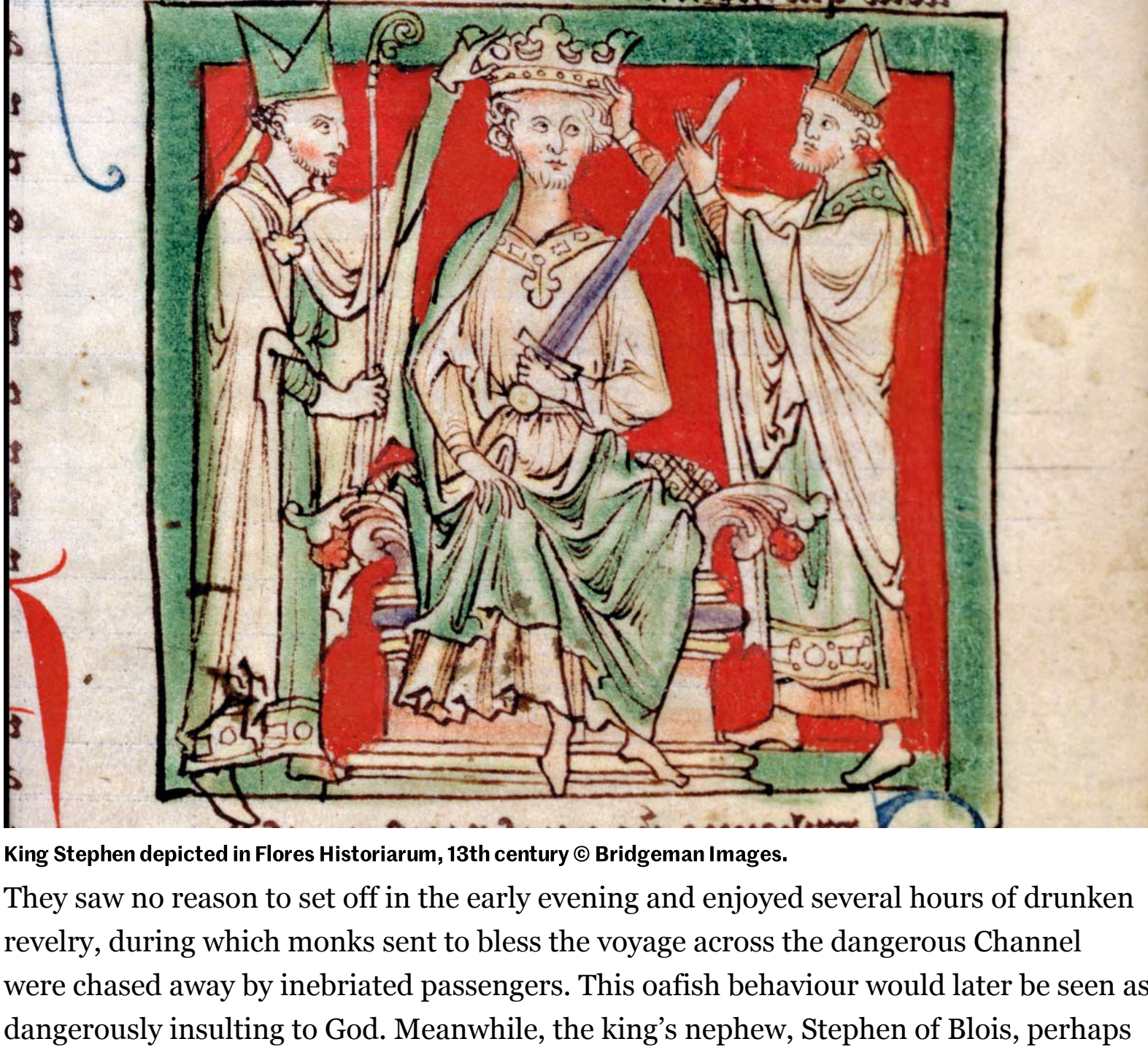
In 1116 Henry crossed the Channel once more to fight for his son's right to succeed him as Duke of Normandy and to counter the competing claims of his nephew, Clito. With him went his English army, free to leave home because of Henry's peace with the Scots and his control of the aristocracy.

The future of Normandy seemed settled on the battlefield of Brémule, in August 1119. The king fought on foot and in his ranks served William Ætheling and two of Henry's other sons, Richard of Lincoln and Robert FitzRoy. Defeated, Louis was forced to recognise William Ætheling as the next Duke of Normandy.

The ship sails

With William Ætheling already established as 'designated king' of England, Henry's main paternal and dynastic duties were done. As he embarked on his ship in the port of Barfleur for the triumphant voyage to Southampton, Henry left William to follow on board a magnificent vessel, the *White Ship*, skippered by the son of the captain of the Conqueror's flagship during the invasion of 1066.

William Ætheling was joined on the *White Ship* by major figures in the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, including his half-brother and half-sister, first cousins and 18 of the highest ranking ladies in the land. He was also joined by the powerful bureaucrats, who saw that Henry's strong rule was adhered to, and by celebrated knights, who knew they were soon to be rewarded for their battlefield heroics.



King Stephen depicted in Flores Historiarum, 13th century © Bridgeman Images.

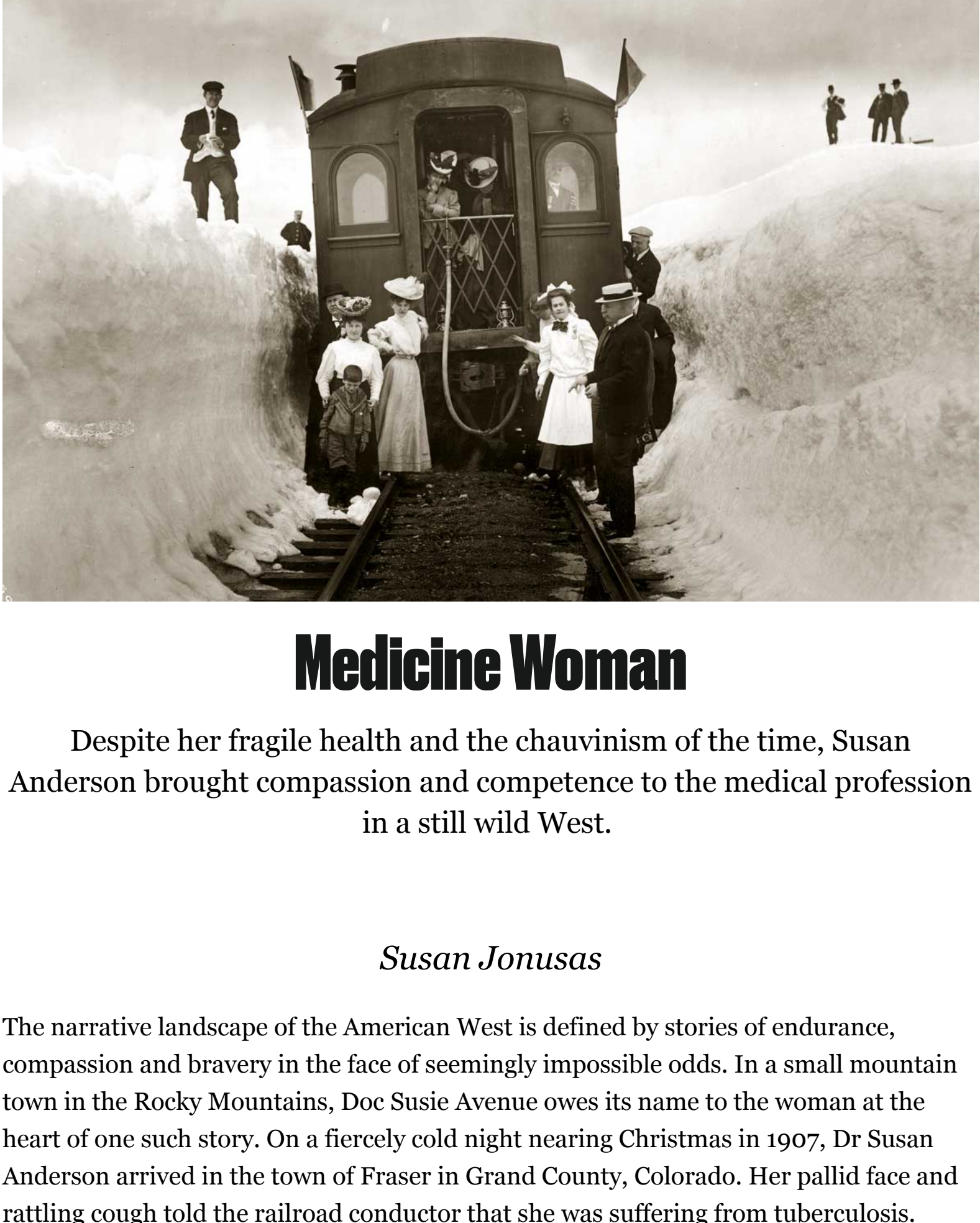
They saw no reason to set off in the early evening and enjoyed several hours of drunken revelry, during which monks sent to bless the voyage across the dangerous Channel were chased away by inebriated passengers. This oafish behaviour would later be seen as dangerously insulting to God. Meanwhile, the king's nephew, Stephen of Blois, perhaps because he had overindulged, suffered from diarrhoea and insisted on being set ashore.

The others aboard the White Ship set off after nightfall, shouting at the 50 oarsmen to bend their backs so they might arrive in Southampton before the king, despite his head start. The helmsman – presumably as drunk as the rest of the crew – fatally misjudged the ship's course. The White Ship rammed hard into the Quillebœuf Rock, a mile north-east of Barfleur harbour, and water poured through the ruptured timber. When the crew tried to prise the vessel from the rock, the passengers fell into the icy waters of the Channel.

All is lost

Orderic Vitalis took up the tale, drawing on the testimony of the sole survivor of the shipwreck, Berold the Butcher. Berold, from Rouen, had pursued wealthy debtors aboard the ship, eager for payment. Scrambling onto the broken mast with one of Henry's greatest knights, the unlikely pair watched as the prince, William Ætheling, was rescued by bodyguards who threw him into the ship's sole rowing boat. Hearing his half-sister screaming, William ordered the rowing boat turn to save her, but it was swamped by drowning passengers scrambling aboard. The prince died with them.

When Henry was told of the disaster he fell to the ground, screaming in agonised disbelief. It was said he never smiled again during the remaining 15 years of his reign. Henry quickly married again, hoping to produce another male heir, but none came.



Medicine Woman

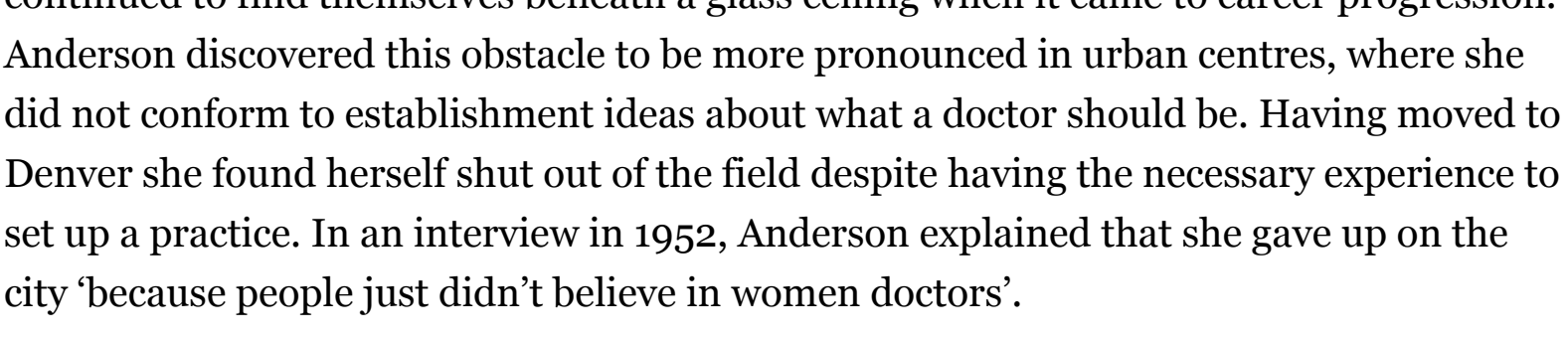
Despite her fragile health and the chauvinism of the time, Susan Anderson brought compassion and competence to the medical profession in a still wild West.

Susan Jonusas

The narrative landscape of the American West is defined by stories of endurance, compassion and bravery in the face of seemingly impossible odds. In a small mountain town in the Rocky Mountains, Doc Susie Avenue owes its name to the woman at the heart of one such story. On a fiercely cold night nearing Christmas in 1907, Dr Susan Anderson arrived in the town of Fraser in Grand County, Colorado. Her pallid face and rattling cough took the railroad conductor that she was suffering from tuberculosis. When Anderson took up residence in a shack on the outskirts of the town, it seemed unlikely she would survive the winter. The possibility that she had stepped into the community that would be her home and her workplace for the next 50 years seemed as unlikely as her chances of recovery.

Born in Indiana in 1870 to parents who divorced when she was five years old, Susan Anderson's early life was shaped by her father. A restless but astute businessman, William Anderson ensured the family's financial success by relocating to the booming cattle town of Wichita, Kansas during the 1880s. Susan proved herself a bright, inquisitive child who excelled both at school and at practical frontier living. William pinned his hopes on his daughter after her younger brother John struggled to live up to the high standards he imposed on his children. In her early teens, when Susan announced that she had taught herself morse code and wanted to be a telegrapher, William dismissed the idea and pushed her towards medicine. By the time the Anderson siblings graduated from Wichita High School in 1891, they had developed a close relationship, drawn together against the overbearing dictates of their father.

When gold was found in the hills of nearby Cripple Creek in Colorado, William Anderson uprooted his family on the hunt for a new business venture. The raucous mining town was Susan Anderson's first exposure to the variety of people she would treat over the course of her career. Leaving her family to complete her education, she travelled to Michigan and enrolled at the state's medical college, where she was one of 13 women in a graduating year of 64 students. Over the course of her studies, a newly introduced module on bacteriology left her with an unwavering dedication to cleanliness, which became one of her defining features as a physician. 'You never saw anyone so clean', recalled Fraser resident Ruth Phillips in an interview with the writer and mountaineer Janet Robertson in 1986.



Susan Anderson, c.1900. Wikimedia/Creative Commons.

Anderson graduated in 1897 at the age of 27 and returned to Cripple Creek to join her father. In a town where 30,000 inhabitants were served by 55 physicians, she made a name for herself after rescuing the arm of a boy from amputation. The child had dug into and set off unexploded ammunition known as 'bad shot', shattering part of his arm. Anderson's skill at flushing out wounds and ensuring they remained clean meant the surgeon assigned to amputate the limb was not required. Despite her professional success, as the 19th century drew to a close Anderson suffered two personal tragedies that changed the course of her life, driving her to seek independence.

One morning in March 1900, a man all but lost to history called off his engagement to Anderson. Days later she learned from her father that her brother John was delirious with pneumonia. By the time she reached his side, his condition was beyond treatment. 'John was my best friend on earth and now my best friend is in heaven', she wrote in her journal on 20 March 1900. The loss of the two men devastated her and estranged her from the third, her father. She blamed both events on him and their relationship, always troubled, never recovered.

Giving up on Denver

In November 1893, Colorado had become the first state to enact women's suffrage by popular referendum, following a campaign in which female physicians played a vital role. Yet, despite their demonstrable contribution to their communities, female doctors continued to find themselves beneath a glass ceiling when it came to career progression. Anderson discovered this obstacle to be more pronounced in urban centres, where she did not conform to establishment ideas about what a doctor should be. Having moved to Denver she found herself shut out of the field despite having the necessary experience to set up a practice. In an interview in 1952, Anderson explained that she gave up on the city 'because people just didn't believe in women doctors'.

As a last resort Anderson took a position as a nurse in the agricultural community of Greeley. The job was exhausting and, lacking the correct training, she found it monotonous and frustrating. By the summer of 1907 she was forced to acknowledge that she was suffering from tuberculosis. For several years she had managed to keep the disease at bay and avoided making a diagnosis, but the stress of managing a diphtheria epidemic among the children of the community had allowed it to take hold. At the time a common treatment was to relocate to higher climates where the air was considered to be better for the lungs. In December she boarded a train that took her to Fraser.



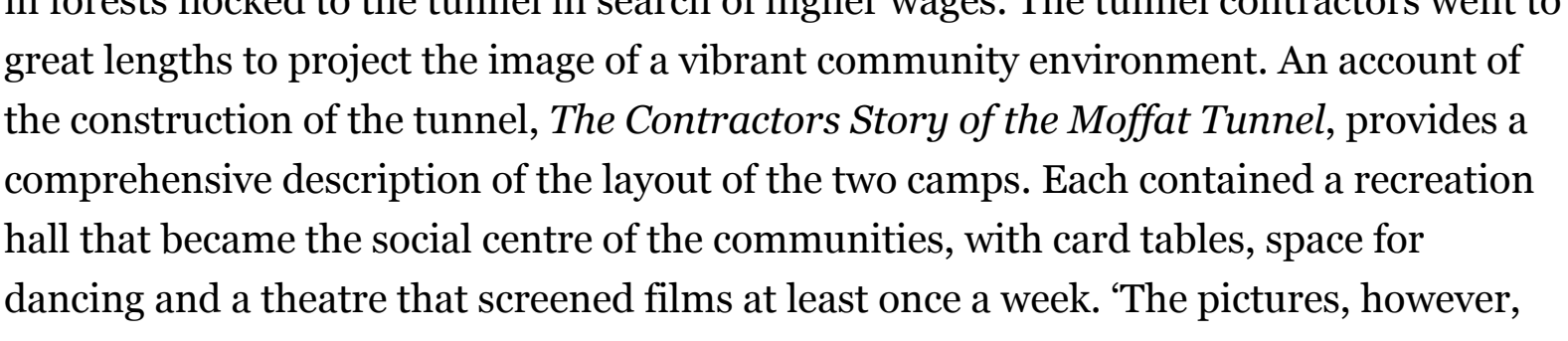
Anderson outside her log cabin home in Cripple Creek, Colorado, c.1893. The Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Photo A J Harlan/Z-141.

By the time the spring thaw drove the lumberjacks down from the forest and into the timber mills, Anderson was through the worst of her disease. She had also been presented with an opportunity to display her skill as a physician on a horse. The patient, 'Dave', had proven uncooperative. 'Every time I stitched up that wound, he yanked the stitches out with his teeth', Anderson told the journalist Eugene Foster more than 40 years later. Eventually she pulled him through. Doctors operating on the frontier often found themselves faced with animal patients and Anderson's skill at treating the animal impressed the town enough that people began to call on her. For women living in cabins with husbands and children in isolated settlements, Anderson's presence was a particular comfort, too. Their lives were hard, lonely and often frightening and she listened to their concerns with a patience not usually afforded to them by her male counterparts.

Working threats

Early on in her time in Grand County, an experience with a destitute family, the Knutsons, imbued Anderson with an even stronger understanding of the need to educate communities about their dietary and medical needs. Called to tend to a sick baby, she arrived only hours before the child, Agnes, died from scurvy. Neither mother nor child had ever seen a doctor, as the family did not have the money to pay for one. The mother had stopped nursing and the child developed scurvy because the canned milk she had been given instead did not provide enough nutrition. Dismayed that the death of the child could have been prevented, Anderson informed the husband that, if he failed to send for her the next time his wife went into labour, she would have him thrown in jail. It was a threat she issued several times over the course of her career and it worked. During her time in Fraser, Anderson delivered over 250 babies, nearly a quarter of the town's population. She rarely took payment for the service. Anderson never forgot the death of Agnes Knutson, recounting the events to Fraser resident Virginia Cornell when asked if she knew anything about a small, white headstone hidden in the forest.

As a single, professional woman in the West she enjoyed a level of autonomy missing from the lives of her counterparts on the East Coast. But her choice of career left her vulnerable to those who doubted her worth as a physician and sought to humiliate her through sexual harassment. Men frequently called on her, feigning genital issues as an excuse to expose themselves or proposition her. After repeatedly demonstrating her competence as a medical professional, as well as a willingness to put herself in danger to come to the aid of others, the harassment did, eventually, subside. But her status as a single woman ensured an ongoing and prurient fascination with her romantic endeavours. Various accounts from those who lived in the county attach her to married men, lumberjacks, railroad clerks and any eligible man who happened to pass through the area. Anderson never married, but she was an inherently sociable person who adored the company of others and occasionally displayed a sense of the theatrical. In 1912 the *Middle Park Times* reported her escapades at a masquerade ball: 'Dr. Susan Anderson, as Martha Washington was a very typical character and fooled all of 'em.' Later, in her interview with the Associated Press, Anderson mused that she could have married if she 'hadn't flown off the handle so much and said pooh so many times'.



Barracks at Colorado Agricultural Hospital during the Spanish Flu pandemic, 1918 © Getty Images.

Though the community came to love their physician, referring to her affectionately as 'Doc Susie', carving a life in the unforgiving landscape of Grand County was a treacherous task. Towns like Fraser were mountain-locked, joined together by the railroad if you were lucky and a perilous horseback ride if you were not. Anderson walked, drove buggies, struggled with skis and rode horses, often combining several modes of transport to reach isolated patients. In 1952 she described one excursion where a blizzard raged 'so hard I couldn't see the horses in front of the sleigh for the snow'. The timber industry provided her with a constant stream of fractured limbs and trips to remote cabins, where grateful families ushered her in from the cold. The men who worked the railroad came to her with heart conditions they were too afraid to take to a railroad doctor in case they were fired. Anderson was respected for her reliability and was not deterred from reaching patients no matter how hazardous the journey. When she could not treat their condition herself, she escorted them to Denver. In the city which had closed its doors to her because of her gender, she gained a reputation as one of the best diagnosticians and hardest-working physicians in Western Colorado.

When the influenza pandemic, or Spanish Flu, of 1918 reached Colorado, it ripped through the towns in Grand County. Anderson exhausted herself travelling from home to home and her unique method of treating the pneumonia associated with the disease put her in high demand. Placing the patient in a bathtub and draping them in blankets, she poured near-scalding water over them, thrusting a fist against their chest to dislodge fluid in the lungs. The method had a high recovery rate, but the disease was so virulent that she rarely made it to patients in time. The disease killed entire families and abandoned bodies piled up outside local cemeteries. For a country physician with close ties to the people she treated, the experience was devastating.

Lives on the line

In the early 1920s, Anderson would find herself in the path of the railway which had carried her over the mountain to Fraser. In 1923, the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad Company finally started construction on a tunnel that would travel under the Continental Divide.

The Denver and Salt Lake Railroad Company was more commonly known as the Moffat Line after David Moffat, a popular but ill-fated industrialist whose greatest accomplishment during his lifetime was linking Denver to the mountain settlements west of the Divide via a route over the mountains. Rollins Pass, with an elevation of 11,660ft, required workers to risk their lives. The wooden tunnels that lined the pass at its highest points offered some protection from the elements, but when Anderson travelled through them in December 1907 the experience nearly killed her. Coal smoke and other gases built up in the tunnels when the engines remained idle at stations or became stranded. Anderson, with her tubercular lungs, began to suffocate until the train reached clean air on the other side of the pass. Railroad workers frequently passed out after spending time in the sheds; those with weaker lungs died. Despite the difficult working conditions, Moffat was seen well liked among his employees. An engineer named George Schryer, who drove the locomotives over the top at Rollins Pass, told Anderson that Moffat allowed drivers to write their own contracts. He had also promised the men a 100 per cent pay rise once the railroad reached Salt Lake City. Moffat's dream for decades was to complete the line to Utah, but by 1911 it had taken the company to bankruptcy and its owner to his grave.



Colorado street scene, late 19th century © Getty Images.

The construction of a tunnel beneath the Divide was at the forefront of William R. Freeman's mind when he took control of the floundering company in 1917. To plug the financial leak, Freeman embarked on a campaign to slash pay and reduce services, immediately alienating himself from his employees and the communities who lived along the line. He openly challenged the railroad unions and when the *Craig Empire* reported a rumoured pay strike, employees came forward accusing Freeman of 'trying for a year or more to make us strike' so that he could hire in cheaper labour from out of state. As their physician, Anderson was well acquainted with the impact Freeman's tenure was having on her community. Nearly a decade later, Anderson would mobilise a group of his workers in a protest against his treatment of them.

Freeman may have been unpopular, but the idea of the Moffat Tunnel was not. Communities in the area believed the project was the key to rescuing the area's struggling economy. When news came that the contractors had been appointed, a rush of newcomers appeared in Fraser, keen to capitalise on the influx of workers to the county. At what were to be the east and west portals through the Divide, camps for the workers and their families began to grow. The lumberjacks Anderson had once treated in forests flocked to the tunnel in search of higher wages. The tunnel contractors went to great lengths to project the image of a vibrant community environment. An account of the construction of the tunnel, *The Contractors Story of the Moffat Tunnel*, provides a comprehensive description of the layout of the two camps. Each contained a recreation hall that became the social centre of the communities, with card tables, space for dancing and a theatre that screened films at least once a week. 'The pictures, however, made little or no money, but added to the attractiveness of camp life', reports the *Contractors Story*, displaying the company's inherent disconnect from the true needs of its workers. Employees paid a fee of \$1.50 a month in order to have access to six-bed hospitals on either side of the Divide which were always full, with conditions ranging from broken limbs to gas inhalation.

Logs on a train car, Colorado, c.1880 © Getty Images.

Construction finally began in 1923. Three years later Anderson accepted the position of County Coroner, knowing it would pit her against the Tunnel Commission's desire to quash rumours of overworked employees and unnecessarily dangerous working conditions. One such case was that of George Biegel, whose face was face blown off when a drill struck an unexploded charge of dynamite. At the inquest Anderson's predecessor had been quick to return a verdict of 'unavoidable accident'. In reality, prolonged hours forced on the men by the company exhausted their concentration and deadened reaction times. The verdict ensured no further investigation into working conditions at the site would be necessary. In its coverage of the incident, the *Steamboat Pilot* listed four more fatalities that had been written off as accidents.

In the way of progress

In February 1928 when the tunnel opened, records put the total number of lives lost at 28. The true number was much higher. Men who died of pneumonia from the constant change in temperature moving from the interior to the exterior of the mountain went unrecorded, for example. In addition, many died later in life from complications with their lungs or suffered injuries that ensured they would never work again. Workers found their experiences erased if they did not fit the narrative of progress pursued by the railroad companies. When Anderson was called to the site of the deadliest accident in the building of the tunnel, she found the contractors more irate over the 100 men who had quit due to unsafe working conditions than over the six mutilated bodies pulled from under 100 tons of rock after hours of searching. During her assessment of the incident, Anderson had been hounded by a reporter from the *Denver Post*. It was not her first run-in with the paper. Two years earlier, one Fred Selak had been beaten and strung up by two young men. His body was cut down three weeks later by Anderson herself. Later, she testified in front of an inquest, knowing that her report would send the two young men to their deaths. The event traumatised her so much that she did not run for coroner again when her term concluded. The *Daily Times* acknowledged her role in the investigation, but the *Post*, when reporting on the case, attributed her work to her male predecessor.

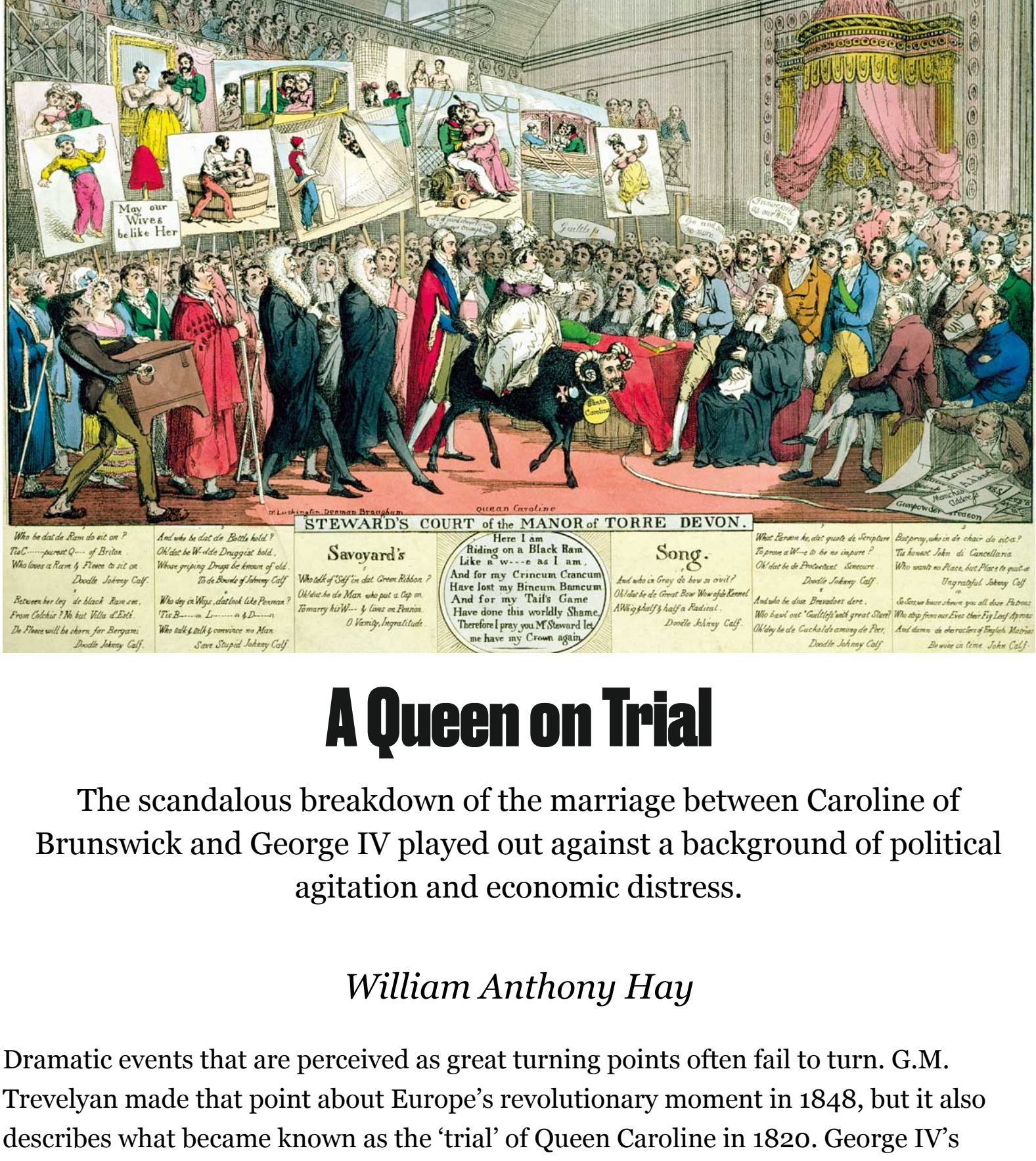
Sign of the times

In the days leading up to the official opening of the tunnel, the area was abuzz with anticipation. Fred Bonfil, the owner of the *Denver Post*, had, in exchange for exclusive rights to cover the event, promised William Freeman a large golden spike which was to be hammered into the ground to commemorate the occasion. Anderson, certain that there would be a place in the ceremony for the men who had worked so hard to realise Moffat's dream, was disgusted to discover that Freeman had taken steps to purposefully exclude them, shunting them aside in favour of dignitaries from out of state. On the day of the opening ceremony, she took steps to encourage a protest. A large pair of boards served as a makeshift sign, the words written in black tar. Workers and their families who had watched Anderson paint the sign rallied around her, inspired by the refusal of their physician to accept the behaviour of the railroad company. Together, the group gathered in a position clearly visible to those onboard the train. When the engine finally emerged amid billowing smoke and jubilant cheers, Freeman was confronted by the sight of the employees he had tried so hard to suppress standing proud beneath the words: 'WE BUILT THE TUNNEL, THE POST DIDN'T.' The *Rocky Mountain News* printed a photograph of the protest on its front page the following day, delighting in the humiliation of its rival newspaper.

Elevated railroad bridge, Georgetown, Colorado, c.1880 © Getty Images.

To the dismay of many, the tunnel was only a temporary fix for the county's economy. The stations that served Rollins Pass fell into disrepair and Freeman fired many of those who operated the line. Workers from the tunnel who had once filled the streets of Fraser

FEATURE



A Queen on Trial

The scandalous breakdown of the marriage between Caroline of Brunswick and George IV played out against a background of political agitation and economic distress.

William Anthony Hay

Dramatic events that are perceived as great turning points often fail to turn. G.M. Trevelyan made that point about Europe's revolutionary moment in 1820, but it also describes what became known as the 'trial' of Queen Caroline in 1820. George IV's accession to the throne in January of that year forced the question of his estranged wife's claims as presumptive queen consort, despite her scandalous conduct in exile. A failed marriage that had curdled into mutual hatred drove him to demand a divorce, which his ministers, especially the prime minister, Lord Liverpool, resisted. Caroline rebuffed the terms offered by ministers to keep her on the Continent. The drama unfolded against a background of acute social tension, as economic distress fed political agitation. Caroline's eventual return to England on 5 June detonated the smouldering political crisis, as she and her cause became a focus for escalating waves of protest.

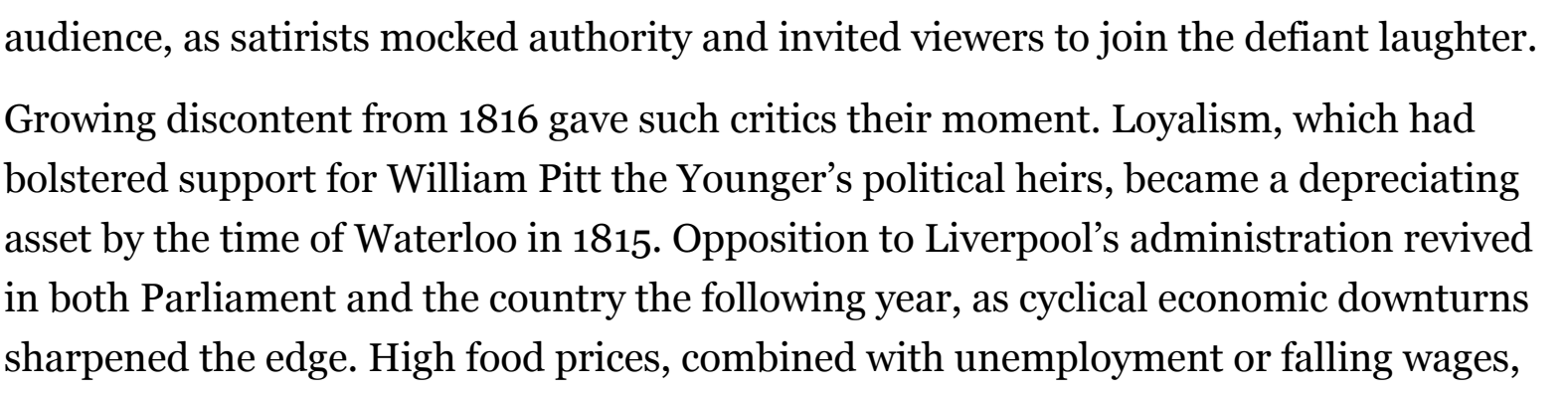
What made a scandalous royal marriage into a political crisis? Some factors, such as the growth of the press and a wider audience for satires originally aimed only at elites, had a long trajectory. Others were more recent developments. Population growth, urbanisation and the impact of new technologies on employment since 1800 complicated a difficult economic adjustment following two decades of war with France. The hardest years of Lord Liverpool's administration came during its middle years, between 1816 and 1822. Queen Caroline's 'trial' was at the apex of those difficulties. The two personalities at the centre of the story also provided ample material for a conflagration.

Cautionary tale

The marriage of George IV and Caroline of Brunswick failed almost before it began on 8 April 1795. The Prince of Wales made the match with Caroline to clear his considerable debts. And, already married, illegally and in secret, to Maria Fitzherbert, a twice-widowed Roman Catholic, and with Frances Villiers, the Countess of Jersey, as his mistress, Caroline would always be an interloper.

Caroline lacked the tact or maturity to win over her prospective husband. Lord Liverpool, who accompanied her to England from Brunswick, noted her impulsive nature and lack of judgement. 'With a *steady* man', he thought, 'she would do vastly well but with one of a different description there were great risks'. Noting the prince's fastidious manners, Malmesbury counselled her to attend more to personal cleanliness. That and other advice had little effect after she arrived to a cool reception in London. On meeting her, the prince called for brandy and soon left the room. Despite conceiving a child together, Princess Charlotte, the couple ceased living as man and wife a few weeks after marrying. The prince, who found his bride physically repulsive, alienated her with his own selfish behaviour.

Repudiating his wife so soon after their marriage and then denying her access to their daughter made Caroline an object of sympathy, especially for women. Rumours of her scandalous behaviour following their separation and of an illegitimate child led to a 'delicate investigation' in 1806, which drew little public notice though it caused trouble for ministers and the royal family. Ironically, Caroline's hospitality to ministers and the prince's ties with the Whig circle of Charles James Fox set many public figures on the opposite side to that they would later take.



A Scene in the New Farce of the Lady and the Devil, by Robert Cruikshank, 1820. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Caroline asked permission to go abroad in 1815. Never was her husband more sincere than when he replied that 'he did not wish to put any impediments in her way'. Caroline feared the Prince Regent might divorce her and exclude their daughter from the throne by producing a son from another marriage. Liverpool noted that a divorce could only be granted on grounds of adultery, though such indiscretions were even more likely with the queen abroad. Reports of Caroline's increasingly uninhibited behaviour in Italy and around the Mediterranean only made things worse.

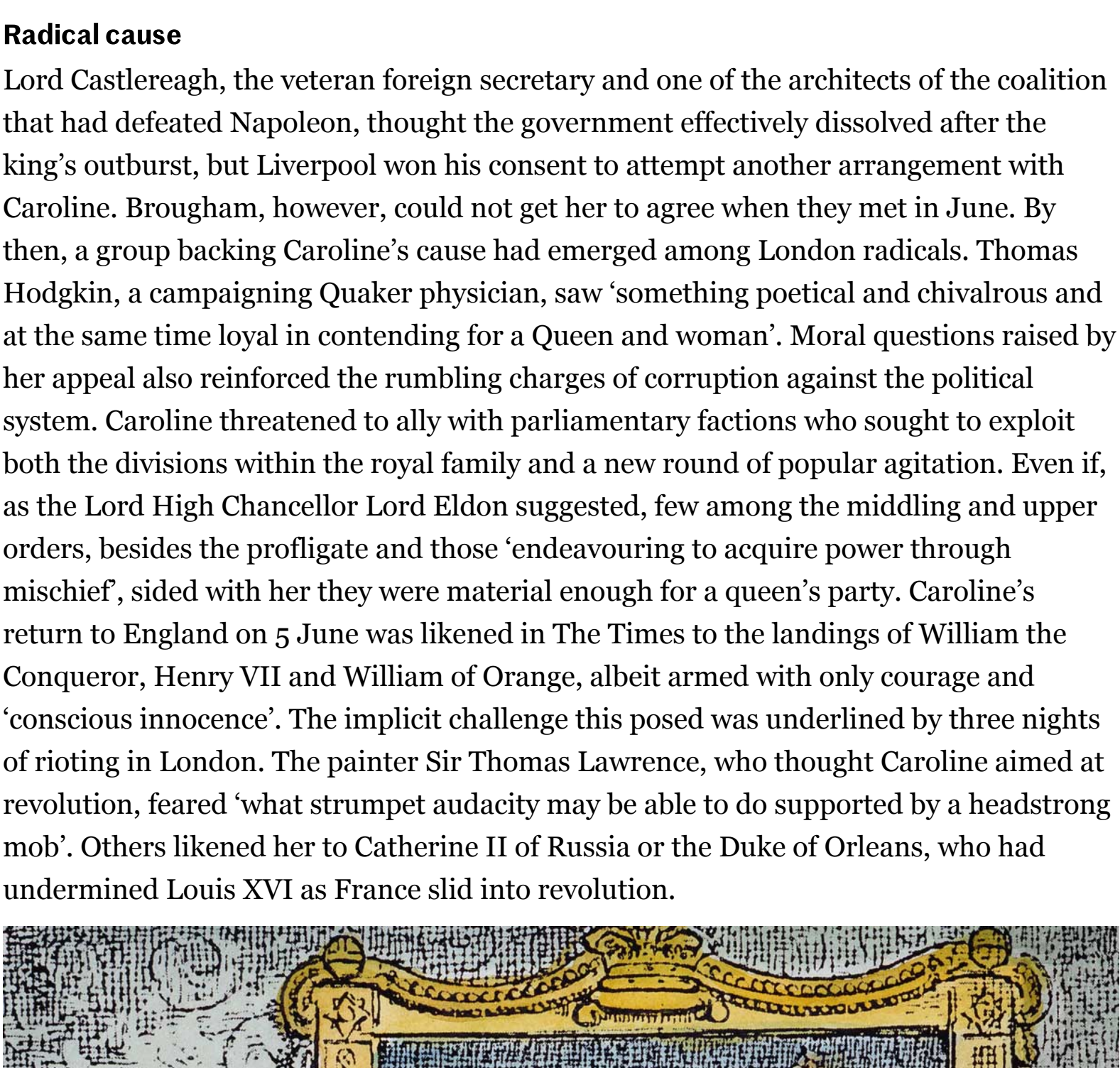
Repeat offenders

Scandal was nothing new for the Hanoverians. George I had separated from his adulterous wife, Sophia Dorothea, before taking the British throne. Christian VII of Denmark divorced and exiled George's great granddaughter, Caroline Matilda, prompting George III's diplomatic intervention to protect his sister. Royal scandals drew varying degrees of attention, but public culture had become less deferential as the reach of newspapers grew. London went from four daily newspapers in 1760 to 1837. Each copy had multiple readers: pubs and coffeehouses made papers available for patrons. Advertising revenue made proprietors, such as the *Morning Chronicle's* James Perry, independent from government support or individual patrons and increasingly conscious of a wider political role.

Critics dubbed William Cobbett's *Weekly Register* 'two-penny trash' for a price that made it accessible even to the poor. The so-called 'pauper press' alarmed elites, who taxed it to raise its costs. Much of the perceived danger lay in a more aggressive, less deferential, tone attractive to discontented readers in periods of hardship. Invoking a comparison with the French Revolution, in 1819 Lord Grenville denounced publications that brought Church, state and the social order into disrepute. Liverpool, too, warned how attacks on religion 'brutalise the public mind'. Indeed, cheap prints, like those of William Hone, drew on scripture and other familiar reference points to extend satire beyond the drawing room. Images, aptly called 'graphic pamphlets', reached a wider audience, as satirists mocked authority and invited viewers to join the defiant laughter.

Growing discontent from 1816 gave such critics their moment. Loyalism, which had bolstered support for William Pitt the Younger's political heirs, became a depreciating asset by the time of Waterloo in 1815. Opposition to Liverpool's administration revived in both Parliament and the country the following year, as cyclical economic downturns sharpened the edge. High food prices, combined with unemployment or falling wages, aroused social tensions that fuelled popular unrest. Workers, fearing their replacement by technology, had reacted by breaking machinery and damaging factories. The middling classes felt a scissors effect as high costs and lower earnings hit merchants, manufacturers and agriculturalists. The Whig MP Henry Brougham, a champion of liberal causes, leveraged their anger behind a campaign that ended income tax in 1816. Revived concerns about taxation reinforced older rhetoric attacking what had been called the 'old corruption' that enabled insiders to feed their appetite for money and power at the public's expense.

Waves of popular unrest posed a dangerous challenge, as agitators such as Henry Hunt seized the opportunities created by social tension. They combined, as the historian J.C.D. Clark has argued, criticism of the Church of England with political attacks on the unreformed Parliament, the Crown and the landowners, who provided its main support. Reformers, radicals insisted, would bring an end to the national debt and high taxes. They offered both a simpler diagnosis and solution than any the propertied classes could provide. Grounded in a philosophy drawn from Thomas Paine, a pamphleteer and proponent of the American and French Revolutions, their arguments reinforced the larger critique of elite parasitism urged forcefully after the victory over Napoleon at Waterloo. Scandals discrediting institutions and elites only bolstered the case.



Installation of a Knight Companion of the Bath, 1821. Albany.

Violence in 1816 brought a temporary suspension of *habeas corpus*, but radicals mounted a more organised campaign in 1819, demanding parliamentary reform. Besides nationalising previously local discontent, their disciplined actions, however peaceful, raised an alarming spectre. A meeting in Birmingham on 12 July appointed a 'legislatorial attorney', as the city had no MP of its own, with instructions to demand organisation when Parliament met. Earlier in Oldham a group had called upon the people to organise themselves, as petitioning was useless. Magistrates twice postponed a meeting at St Peter's Fields in Manchester that gathered on 16 August. Their order that troops disperse the crowd resulted in what became known as the Peterloo Massacre, with 11 dead and hundreds injured. The government declared its support for the magistrates before introducing legislation later that year, known as the Six Acts, to restrict agitation, reflecting widespread concerns about the fragility of public order. This agitation subsided, but the abortive Cato Street Conspiracy to murder the entire Cabinet in February 1820 gave those fears fresh credence.

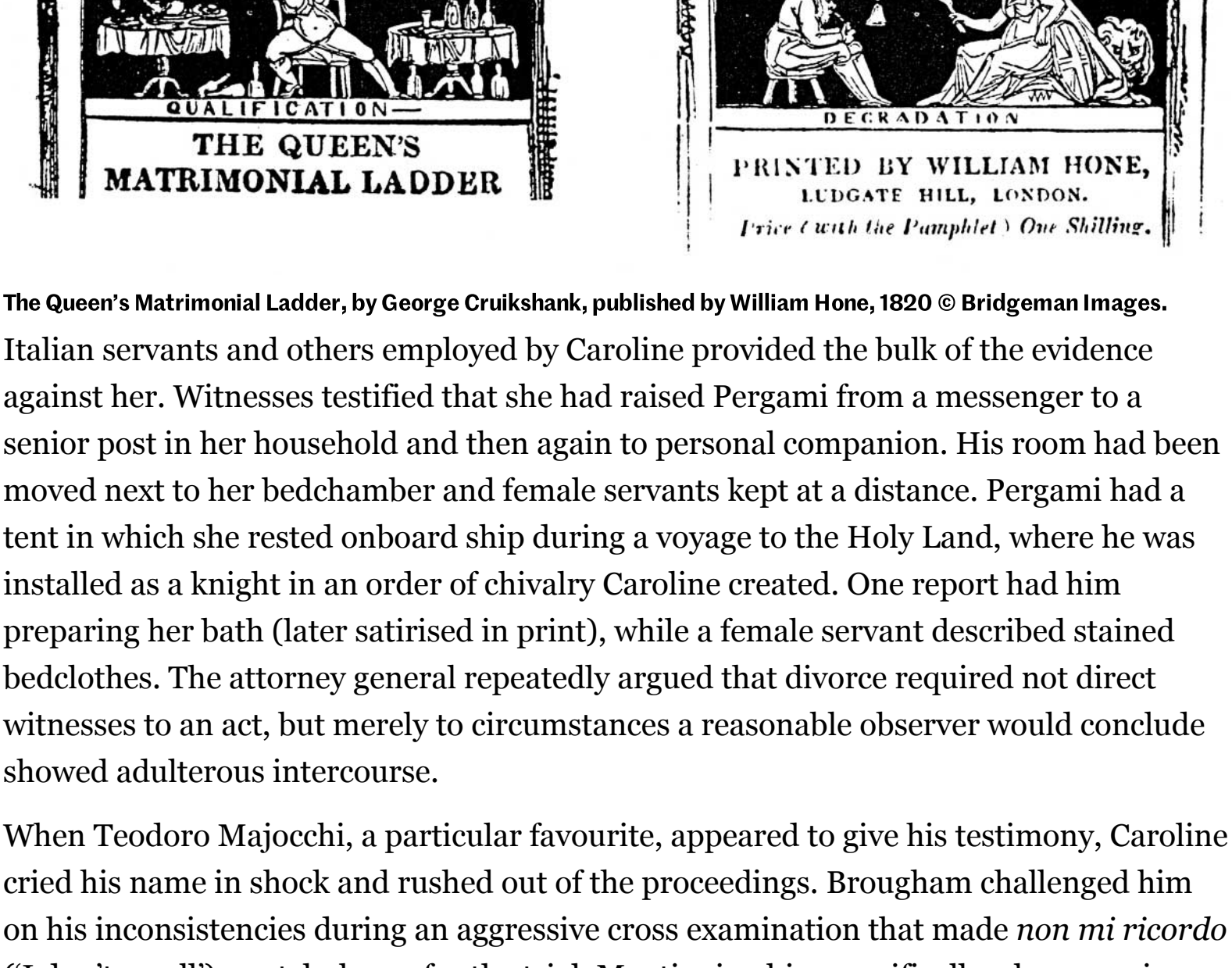
Gathering storm

When the Prince Regent had first raised the issue of divorce in 1816, Liverpool and his colleagues sought to dissuade him from pursuing such a potentially hazardous course 'in these days of faction and a licentious press'. Two years later, Sir John Leach, the prince's legal adviser, proposed sending agents to gather potentially incriminating information on Caroline's activities in exile. What became known as the Milan Commission – she was living in Italy at the time – alarmed Caroline. Brougham, as her legal adviser, proposed the idea of a negotiated settlement, but he overestimated Caroline's willingness to compromise. Instead, she threatened a return to England to fight for her position and reputation. Leach saw a parliamentary inquiry as the only path to a divorce, which the Cabinet resisted, as it threatened to cause the uproar they were determined to avoid. As long as Caroline remained abroad and upheld no higher station than Princess of Wales, ministers were content to let things lie.

George III's death on 29 January 1820 forced the issue by turning a personal matter into the question of whether a woman of Caroline's repute should be accorded the honours and privileges of Queen Consort to George IV, as the Prince Regent had become. When the new king demanded a divorce, the Cabinet's fears of a public controversy with unforeseeable consequences threatened to materialise. Success, Liverpool warned, 'might be won with such personal discomfort to the king as would more than outweigh any advantage', while failure must bring 'the triumphant establishment in the country of one who would in that event be represented as the intended victim of persecution'. George IV rejected the idea of a financial settlement that required Caroline to stay abroad in an audience that ended with him angrily ordering Liverpool from the room. Their relationship was damaged almost beyond repair.

Radical cause

Lord Castlereagh, the veteran foreign secretary and one of the architects of the coalition that had defeated Napoleon, thought the government effectively dissolved after the king's outburst, but Liverpool won his consent to attempt another arrangement with Caroline. Brougham, however, could not get her to agree when they met in June. By then, a group backing Caroline's cause had emerged among London radicals. Thomas Hodgkin, a campaigning Quaker physician, saw 'something poetical and chivalrous and at the same time loyal in contending for a Queen and woman'. Moral questions raised by her appeal also reinforced the rumbling charges of corruption behind the political system. Caroline threatened to ally with parliamentary factions who sought to exploit both the divisions within the royal family and a new round of popular agitation. Even if, as the Lord High Chancellor Lord Eldon suggested, few among the middling and upper orders, besides the profligate and those 'endeavouring to acquire power through mischief', sided with her they were material enough for a queen's party. Caroline's return to England on 5 June was likened in *The Times* to the landings of William the Conqueror, Henry VII and William of Orange, albeit armed with only courage and 'conscious innocence'. The implicit challenge this posed was underlined by three nights of rioting in London. The painter Sir Thomas Lawrence, who thought Caroline aimed at revolution, feared 'what strumpet audacity may be able to do supported by a headstrong mob'. Others likened her to Catherine II of Russia or the Duke of Orleans, who had undermined Louis XVI as France slid into revolution.



Reflection: To Be, or Not to Be?, 1820, by Robert Cruikshank © Bridgeman Images.

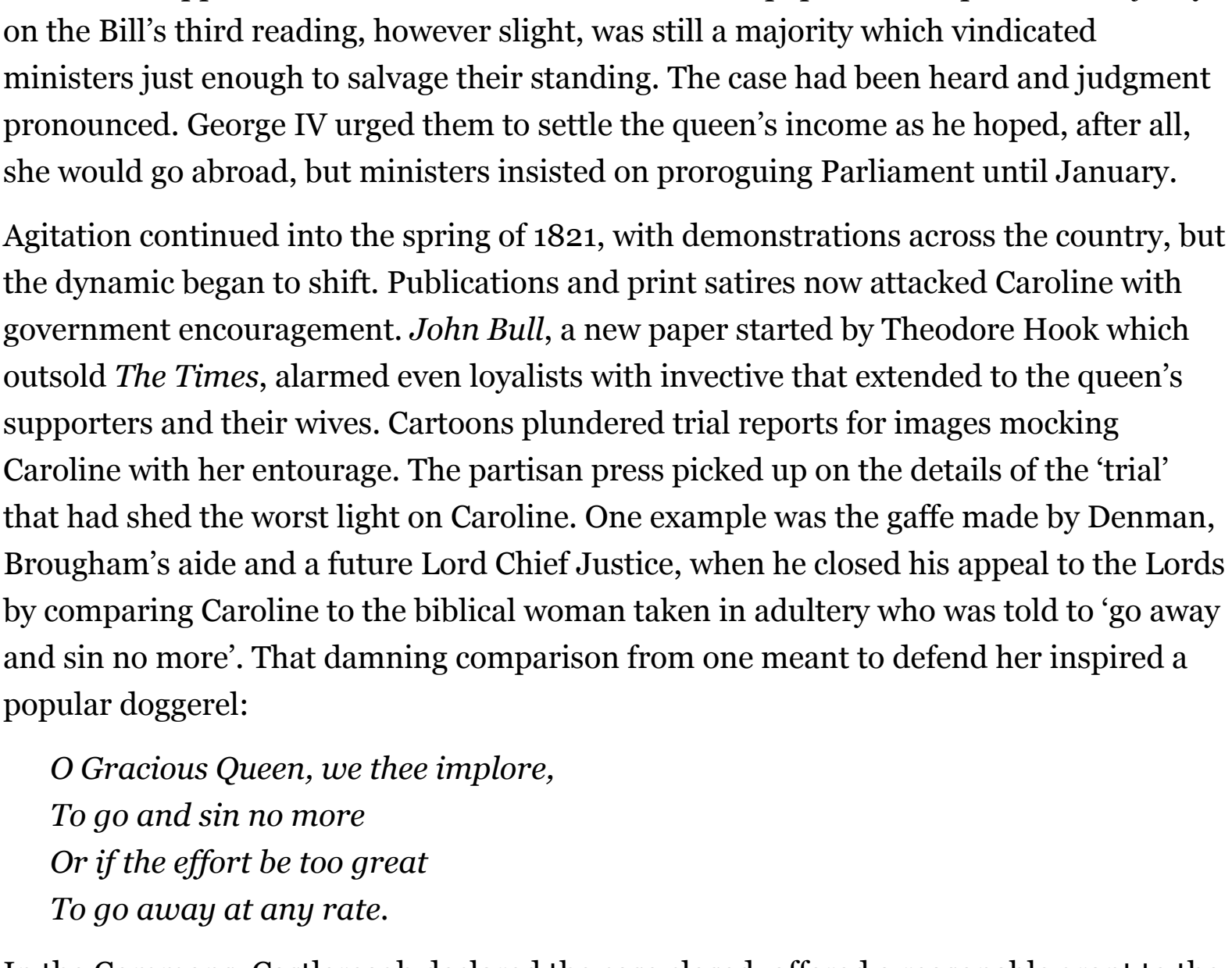
Exaggerated as such parallels seemed, they showed growing unease. Discipline faltered among Guards regiments in London as soldiers protested against the extra duty for keeping order. Liverpool reported agitators in public houses preaching the Spanish army's example of aiding a coup against their king. The *Morning Chronicle* praised a revolution in Naples for 'being achieved by the soldiery, since *whenever* they raised their voice it is *imperative*', while the *Leeds Mercury* lauded the goal of a representative constitution. It seemed that 1820 was turning into a revolutionary year, especially since the heir to the French throne had been assassinated in January. Although the army had been reliable during earlier unrest, troops now defiantly toasted the queen's health. Their disaffection threatened to remove a break on the mob. As one wit quipped, the extinguisher seemed to have caught fire. Not surprisingly, Parliament wanted the controversy ended without an embarrassing public inquiry.

Ministers failed to bring Caroline to a settlement by which she would leave England once more. Evidence gathered by the Milan Commission that she had taken a former servant, Bartolomeo Pergami, as her lover and of other scandalous behaviour was passed in secret to committees in both the Lords and the Commons. Liverpool and the Cabinet determined to get a Bill of Pains and Penalties through the Lords, after which it would go to the Commons. Caroline's case became a party issue, with opposition Whigs turning it against the government.

Who's queen?

Queen Caroline's 'trial' began on 17 August when Liverpool moved the Bill's second reading in the Lords. A cordon of troops and a warship in the Thames guarded Parliament, where a new gallery accommodated the spectators eager to witness the confrontation. With attendance required barring reasonable excuse, more than twice the number of peers that was usually drawn to major debates appeared. Proceedings allowed evidence and counsel to be heard on both sides, along with cross-examination in a quasi-judicial form. The solicitor and attorney general presented evidence for the Bill with Eldon presiding as Lord High Chancellor, while Liverpool spoke for it in debate. Brougham, along with his assistant Thomas Denman, represented Caroline, who attended the proceedings.

Lord Grey, the opposing Whig leader, demanded the inquiry be dropped in what one observer called 'a speech for office' that sharply criticised the prime minister. He also objected to the method of proceeding, arguing that impeachment, if anything, would be more appropriate. Liverpool, in challenging circumstances, defended the Bill, which, unlike impeachment, gave Caroline ample means to challenge the evidence. No government, Liverpool insisted, could ignore charges that touched on the king's honour as these did and, once brought to notice, the case must be heard. Liverpool and Eldon took pains to give opposing counsel every chance to make their case and both insisted no conclusions be drawn until the defence had been heard.



The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder, by George Cruikshank, published by William Hone, 1820 © Bridgeman Images.

Italian servants and others employed by Caroline provided the bulk of the evidence against her. Witnesses testified that she had raised Pergami from a messenger to a senior post in her household and then again to personal companion. His room had been moved next to her bedchamber and female servants kept at a distance. Pergami had a tent in which she rested onboard ship during a voyage to the Holy Land, where he was installed as a knight in an order of chivalry Caroline created. One report had him preparing her bath (later satirised in print), while a female servant described stained bedclothes. The attorney general repeatedly argued that divorce required not direct witnesses to an act, but merely to circumstances a reasonable observer would conclude showed adulterous intercourse.

When Teodoro Majocchi, a particular favourite, appeared to give his testimony, Caroline cried his name in shock and rushed out of the proceedings. Brougham challenged him on his inconsistencies during an aggressive cross examination that made *non mi ricordo* ('I don't recall') a catchphrase for the trial. Mentioning him specifically when opening his defence, Brougham claimed that this 'favourite expression, would be handed down, much after the same manner as sayings of some of the ancient sages'. Such testimony was open to further ridicule and suspicion in a salacious and xenophobic press because it came from foreigners. It is possible that some of the queen's former favourites were bribed to give evidence against Caroline by the Milan Commission.

Virtue and morality

Shocked that Caroline could sit, seemingly unmoved, through so much of the testimony against her, the Russian ambassador's wife reported that she was backed by 'the solid middle classes who have won England her reputation for virtue and morality'. Insiders, confronted by the charge that 'she is bad', replied that the king was worse and was to blame for her faults. Cheap satires, such as *The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder* by Hone, carried the argument to a popular audience. Lampoons of Italian witnesses, mocking the repetition of *non mi ricordo*, drove it home. The whole proceeding tended to discredit the interests of the establishment, especially when set in a familiar narrative of elite corruption and self interest. Demonstrating Caroline's adultery did not even begin to address that line of criticism.

Brougham cast the trial as a conspiracy against Caroline and urged the Lords to step back from the precipice lest passing the Bill discredit them before the country. His defence of the queen emphasised the underhand methods of obtaining evidence by the Milan Commission. Some peers, who thought the evidence proved her guilty, still believed the proceedings unlawful. Others thought that airing information reported by the press threatened to injure public morals even further. Pressure grew to withdraw the Bill as Grey sought to use its defeat to force ministers from office. Wellington noted privately that dropping the Bill would expose ministers 'as but a set of tricksters'. Liverpool raised the possibility of abandoning it, but the Cabinet demurred as it now had become a question of confidence they could not dodge.

The Royal Extinguisher, by George Cruikshank, 1821. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

Liverpool told the Lords that, having heard the evidence, they were obliged to pronounce an opinion. Rejecting the Bill on prudential grounds would be 'a triumph of guilt'. Denying that it had proven adultery made past court rulings and their own votes in divorce cases with the same level of proof 'a code of the greatest cruelty, oppression and injustice'. When the Bill's third reading passed by just nine votes on 6 November, Liverpool announced to the Lords that the state of the country and the slim majority determined him to proceed no longer; he would not introduce the Bill before the Commons. Grey angrily charged ministers with betraying their king, insulting the queen and shocking the morals of society.

Fading of queen fever

Caroline's supporters celebrated the news. It seemed a popular triumph, but a majority on the Bill's third reading, however slight, was still a majority which vindicated ministers just enough to salvage their standing. The case had been heard and judgment pronounced. George IV urged them to settle the queen's income as he hoped, after all, she would go abroad, but ministers insisted on proroguing Parliament until January.

Agitation continued into the spring of 1821, with demonstrations across the country, but the dynamic began to shift. Publications and print satires now attacked Caroline with government encouragement. *John Bull*, a new paper started by Theodore Hook which outlasted *The Times*, alarmed even loyalists with invective that extended to the queen's supporters and their wives. Cartoons plundered trial reports for images mocking Caroline with her entourage. The partisan press picked up on the details of the 'trial' that had shed the worst light on Caroline. One example was the gaffe made by Denman, Brougham's aide and a future Lord Chief Justice, when he closed his appeal to the Lords by comparing Caroline to the biblical woman taken in adultery who was told to 'go away and sin no more'. That damning comparison from one meant to defend her inspired a popular doggerel:

*O Gracious Queen, we thee implore,
To go and sin no more
Or if the effort be too great
To go away at any rate.*

In the Commons, Castlereagh declared the case closed, offered a reasonable grant to the queen and blamed Whigs and Radicals for prolonging discussion. Government majorities on several motions saw the government recover. Liverpool had challenged Parliament to back his government or replace it and had called the opposition's bluff. Caroline lost popular support when she accepted a large income on 2 March without her name being restored to the list of formal prayers for the royal family. Exclusion from George IV's coronation made her seem more pathetic than wronged. Caroline determined to go abroad, but fell ill and died on 7 August. Violent demonstrations as her coffin passed through London to be taken by ship to Germany marked the coda to a dramatic year.

Queen Caroline's trial mobilised public opinion to an unprecedented degree as parliamentary opposition jostled to catch ministers off their guard. These failed, however, and the very nature of the case focused increasingly on her plight as a woman scorned. Petitions from women supporting Caroline played on personal aspects of her case rather than its constitutional implications. Neither parliamentary reform nor more



On the Wrong Side of History

A celebrated novelist and tireless social reformer, Mary Ward has been all but forgotten because of her support for the anti-suffrage movement.

Debra Davidson-Smith

In February 1912 a capacity crowd of 9,000 filled London's Royal Albert Hall, which had been decorated for the occasion in the black, white and pink colours of their cause. Some 20,000 people had applied for tickets to this grand rally to make their voices heard on the issue of women's suffrage, but the speakers who took to the stage were not there to call for women to get the vote, but to argue against it.

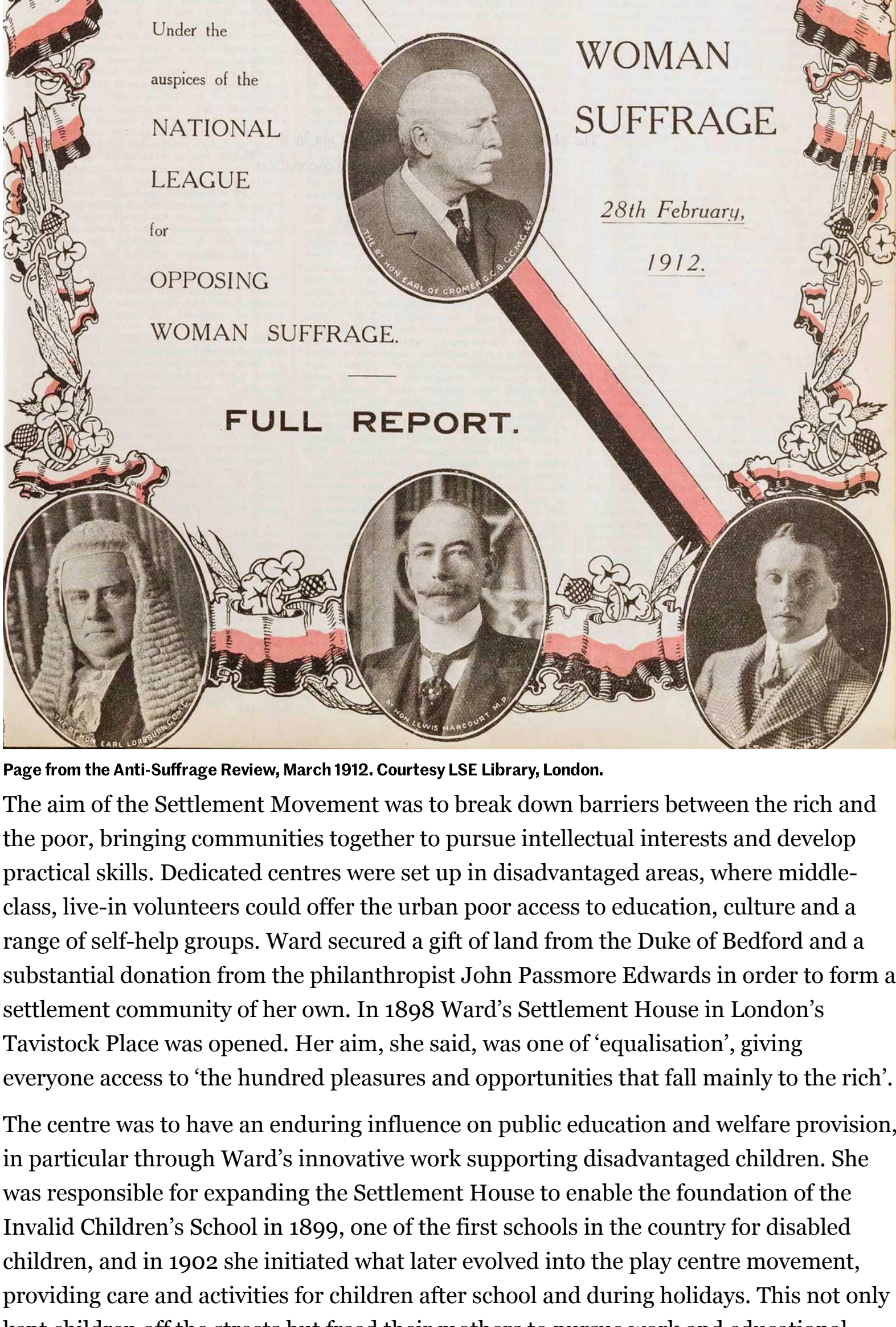
This mass anti-suffrage rally was the largest of several organised by the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage, an organisation set up to campaign against women being given the parliamentary vote. While it may come as no surprise that the organisation was supported by many men, what is much less well known is the story of those women who did not want the vote. For those brought up on heroic tales of the early women's movement and its charismatic leaders, the existence of women who fought passionately against being granted the vote might come as something of an unpleasant shock. Yet, throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries there were many women who both supported and took leadership roles within the anti-suffrage movement. Mary Ward was among the most important of them.

The Famous Mrs Ward

Mary Ward (1851-1920) was a determined campaigner and bestselling author, who would probably be best remembered today as a social reformer had she not become involved in a cause so out of temper with modern ideologies. Her achievements as a novelist, a promoter of women's education, a philanthropist and a war correspondent, as well as her appointment as one of England's first female magistrates, have been almost entirely erased by her support for what rapidly became the unfashionable cause of anti-suffragism.

It is important to stress Ward's considerable achievements and contemporary fame because, despite her bestseller status and pioneering educational work, she has largely been forgotten since her death in 1920, portrayed by her opponents as outdated, reactionary, contradictory and faintly ridiculous. Yet writing, as she preferred, under her married name as Mrs Humphry Ward she was one of the most famous novelists of her generation. She used her considerable fame and the substantial amounts of money she made from it to provide for her family and to fund her philanthropic and educational activities. Ward's biographer John Sutherland says that by 1905 she was probably the highest paid woman in England and could 'plausibly claim to be the greatest living writer in the world'. She was praised by Mark Twain, Henry James and Arthur Conan Doyle, while Leo Tolstoy declared her to be the greatest English novelist of her day. Her literary tours brought her fame on both sides of the Atlantic, so much so that she was said to be the best-known Englishwoman in America. During the First World War her standing was so high that she was asked to write a book encouraging American support for the British war effort, which is how in 1915 Ward became the first woman journalist to visit the Western Front.

Ward came from a family of writers, educationalists and intellectuals and although, or perhaps because, she did not attend university herself, she was passionate about higher education for women. She helped launch a lecture series for women at Oxford, encouraging women to continue their education after marriage and motherhood, and she was involved in the foundation of Somerville, Oxford's first all-female college. But it was her work with the Settlement Movement among the urban poor which most fully realised her vision for the role of education in social reform.



Page from the *Anti-Suffrage Review*, March 1912. Courtesy LSE Library, London.

The aim of the Settlement Movement was to break down barriers between the rich and the poor, bringing communities together to pursue intellectual interests and develop practical skills. Dedicated centres were set up in disadvantaged areas, where middle-class, live-in volunteers could offer the urban poor access to education, culture and a range of self-help groups. Ward secured a gift of land from the Duke of Bedford and a substantial donation from the philanthropist John Passmore Edwards in order to form a settlement community of her own. In 1898 Ward's Settlement House in London's Tavistock Place was opened. Her aim, she said, was one of 'equalisation', giving everyone access to 'the hundred pleasures and opportunities that fall mainly to the rich'.

The centre was to have an enduring influence on public education and welfare provision, in particular through Ward's innovative work supporting disadvantaged children. She was responsible for expanding the Settlement House to enable the foundation of the Invalid Children's School in 1899, one of the first schools in the country for disabled children, and in 1902 she initiated what later evolved into the play centre movement, providing care and activities for children after school and during holidays. This not only kept children off the streets but freed their mothers to pursue work and educational opportunities.

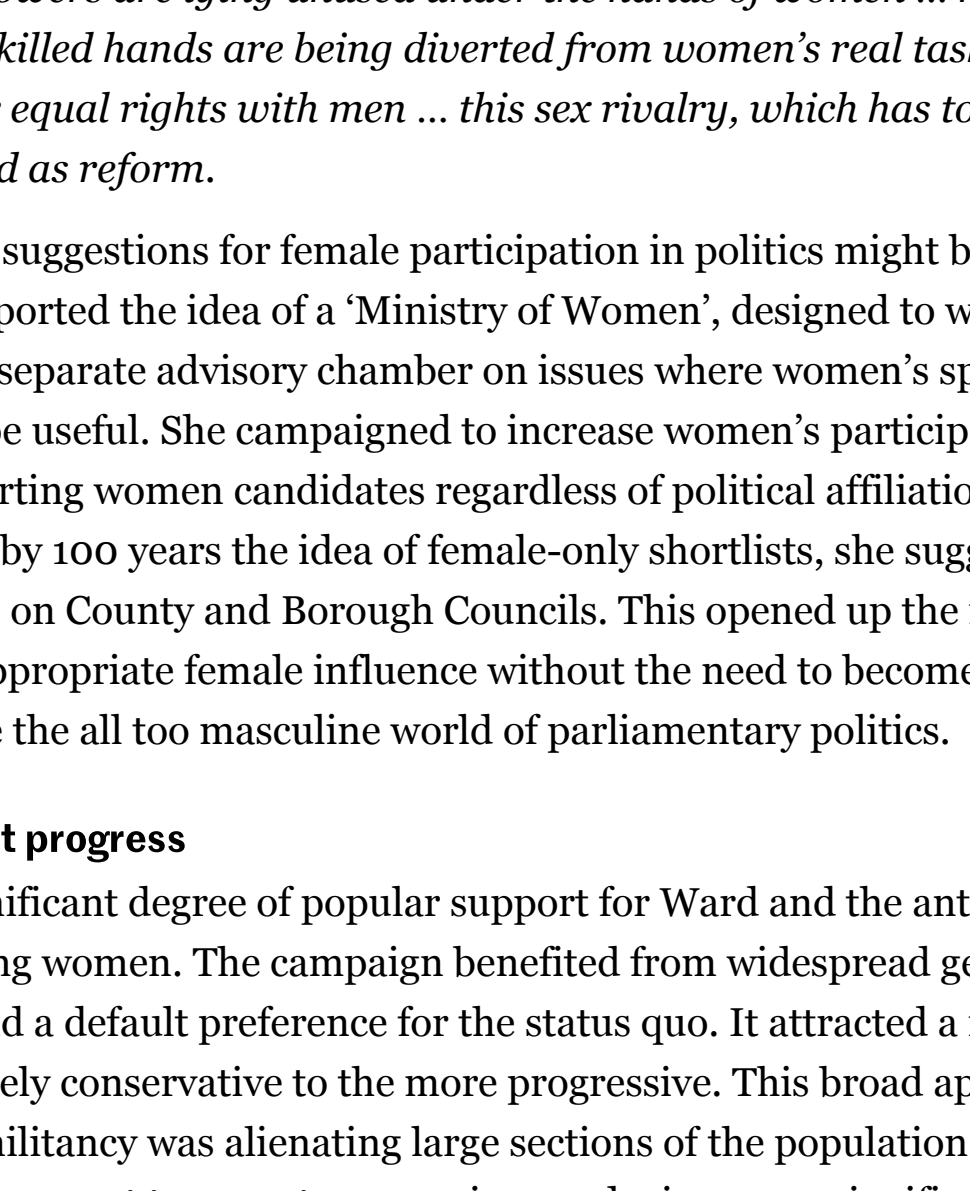
Special strengths

How was this complex and in some ways progressive campaigner able to reconcile her activities as a high-achieving woman and social reformer with her leading role in the anti-suffrage movement? The apparent contradiction can be at least partly explained by the surprising diversity of opinion contained within the anti-suffrage movement. The campaign against the vote was not purely reactionary. It attracted supporters with a variety of reasons for opposing female enfranchisement. Some, of course, did argue that women were simply unsuited emotionally and intellectually to the world of politics. They thought that giving women the vote would upset the natural order, create friction within families, threaten the Empire and lead to a breakdown of chivalry, respect and the protection of women. Others, such as Ward, took an entirely different approach.

As one of a group of female anti-suffragists labelled the 'radical right', she promoted what became known as the progressive 'Forward Policy'. Ward claimed that while there were differences between the sexes, feminine difference did not denote inferiority. Laying down the Anti-Suffrage League's manifesto in 1908, Ward wrote that,

Women are not 'undeveloped men' but diverse, and the more complex the development of any state, the more diverse. Difference not inferiority – it is on that we take our stand.

Women, she believed, were as capable as men, if not better in some respects, but they were intended to take on a different role in society, a more caring and maternal role, which depended on moral and spiritual strength. The boisterous, militaristic and sometimes sordid nature of parliamentary politics would, she believed, endanger these special strengths and there remained opportunities for women to take on gendered public service duties in many other ways. Women were able to vote and stand for election on parish, district and county councils and it was here that Ward thought women should apply themselves. She argued that women could carry out what she described as 'the enlarged housekeeping of the nation', through their work in local government, the running of schools and hospitals and in charitable work caring for the poor, disabled and elderly. In Ward's view, participation in these activities was directly connected to family life, unlike national and imperial politics.



National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage badge, c.1908-10. Courtesy LSE Library, London.

Ward's daughter Janet wrote that her mother did not want women to sit at home 'with their embroidery frames', because she believed it was the duty of educated women to work enthusiastically for their fellow citizens. Ward called for an expanded role for women, but only in appropriate areas of public life. Making this point she argued that:

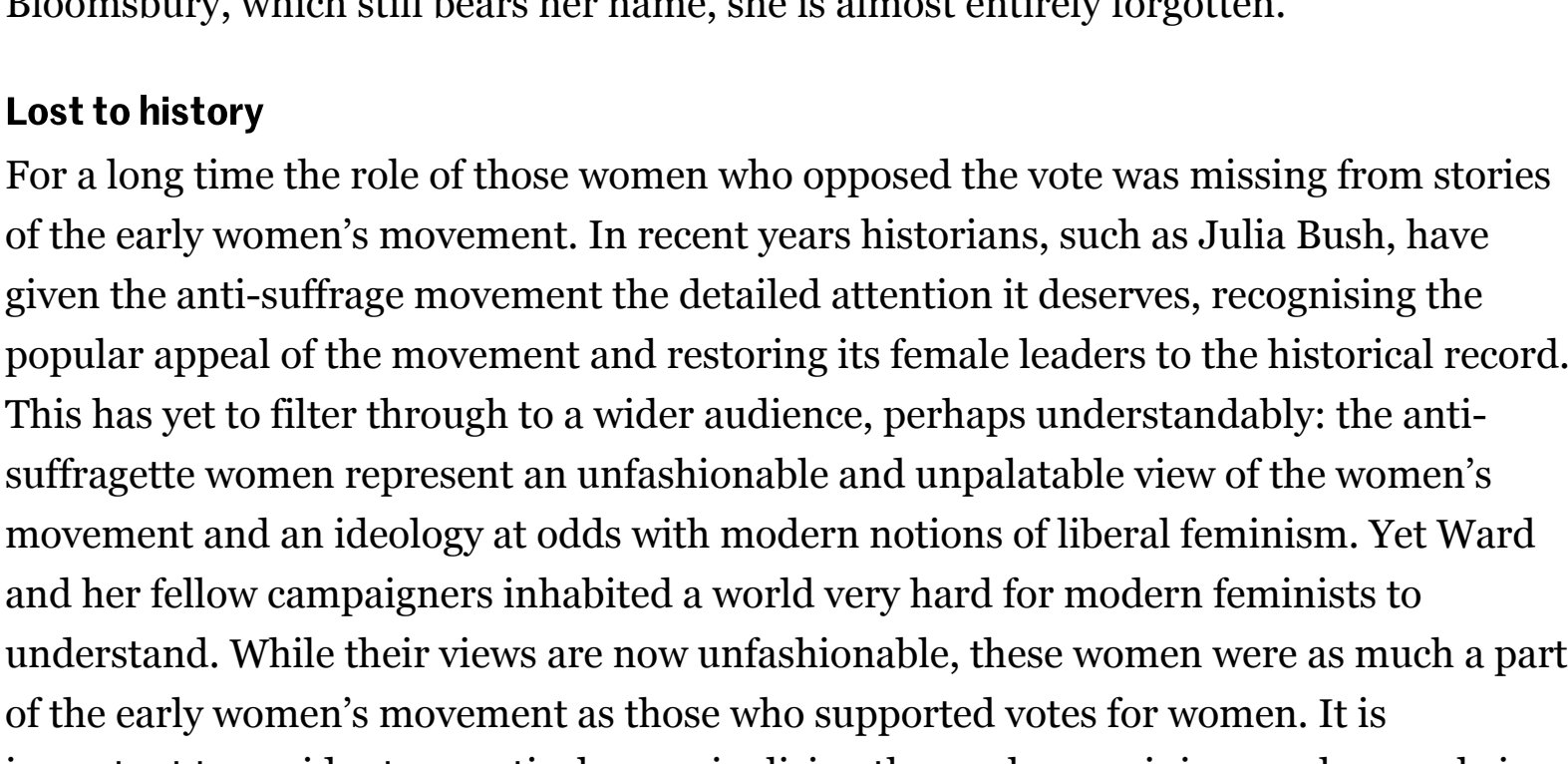
all sorts of powers are lying unused under the hands of women ... meanwhile good brains and skilled hands are being diverted from women's real tasks to this barren agitation for equal rights with men ... this sex rivalry, which has too often masqueraded as reform.

Many of Ward's suggestions for female participation in politics might be considered radical. She supported the idea of a 'Ministry of Women', designed to work alongside Parliament as a separate advisory chamber on issues where women's special skills and insights would be useful. She campaigned to increase women's participation in local elections, supporting women candidates regardless of political affiliations and, in a move predating by 100 years the idea of female-only shortlists, she suggested reserving seats for women on County and Borough Councils. This opened up the idea of creating new means of appropriate female influence without the need to become part of what was considered to be the all too masculine world of parliamentary politics.

Progress against progress

There was a significant degree of popular support for Ward and the anti-suffrage movement among women. The campaign benefited from widespread gender conservatism and a default preference for the status quo. It attracted a range of women from the extremely conservative to the more progressive. This broad appeal, at a time when suffrage militancy was alienating large sections of the population, enabled the anti-suffrage movement to mount a campaign producing some significant results. For ten years from December 1908, their monthly publication, the *Anti-Suffrage Review*, recorded their progress. Within two years the *Review* reported that the anti-suffrage movement had established more than 100 branches, a figure which by 1912 had grown to 235. Membership was also reported to have expanded from 2,000 members in 1908 to around 10,000 just nine months later. By 1914 the *Review* claimed a subscribing membership of 42,000. The National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage was also able to petition Parliament with what it claimed to be the largest petition ever collected regarding female suffrage. By the time Mary Ward's son, the MP Arnold Ward, presented the fourth instalment of their petition to Parliament in 1913, they had collected nearly half a million signatures and were confident enough to call repeatedly for a referendum on the issue. Ward persisted up to 1918 with her claim that the majority of women did not want the vote.

Despite evidence of the popular appeal of the anti-suffrage movement, pro-suffrage campaigners ridiculed their opponents for what they claimed were the contradictions and stupidity of anti-suffrage women making speeches and campaigning up and down the country, while at the same time demanding that women be kept out of certain parts of public life. They portrayed them as backward-looking women who believed that a woman's place was solely in the home. Despite the partisan origins of this interpretation, this portrayal of an absurd and reactionary movement has become the accepted view, largely because, in this case, history was written by the victors. Pro-suffrage women became the chroniclers of their own movement and were the first to tell the suffrage story. These early histories and biographies celebrated the role of inspirational leaders and the drama of militancy, creating a narrative of heroes and villains and a version of history which later generations have largely accepted. Too often these early accounts have been treated as transparent reportage rather than propaganda. Female opponents of suffrage have been misunderstood, misrepresented or just written out of the story.



Mary Ward's Settlement Centre, 1900. Alamy.

This is certainly true of Mary Ward. As John Sutherland points out, despite her considerable contemporary fame and achievements, there were no statues or memorials recognising her literary and philanthropic work. Her celebrity status, already eroded by her connection with a lost and unfashionable cause, faded fast. A week after she died, aged 70, Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary that: 'Mrs Ward is dead; poor Mrs Humphry Ward; and it appears she was merely a woman of straw after all – shovelled into the grave and already forgotten.' Her books touching on morality, religious faith and anti-suffragism were, by 1920, already considered old-fashioned. People simply stopped reading them. Today, other than through the Mary Ward Centre in London's Bloomsbury, which still bears her name, she is almost entirely forgotten.

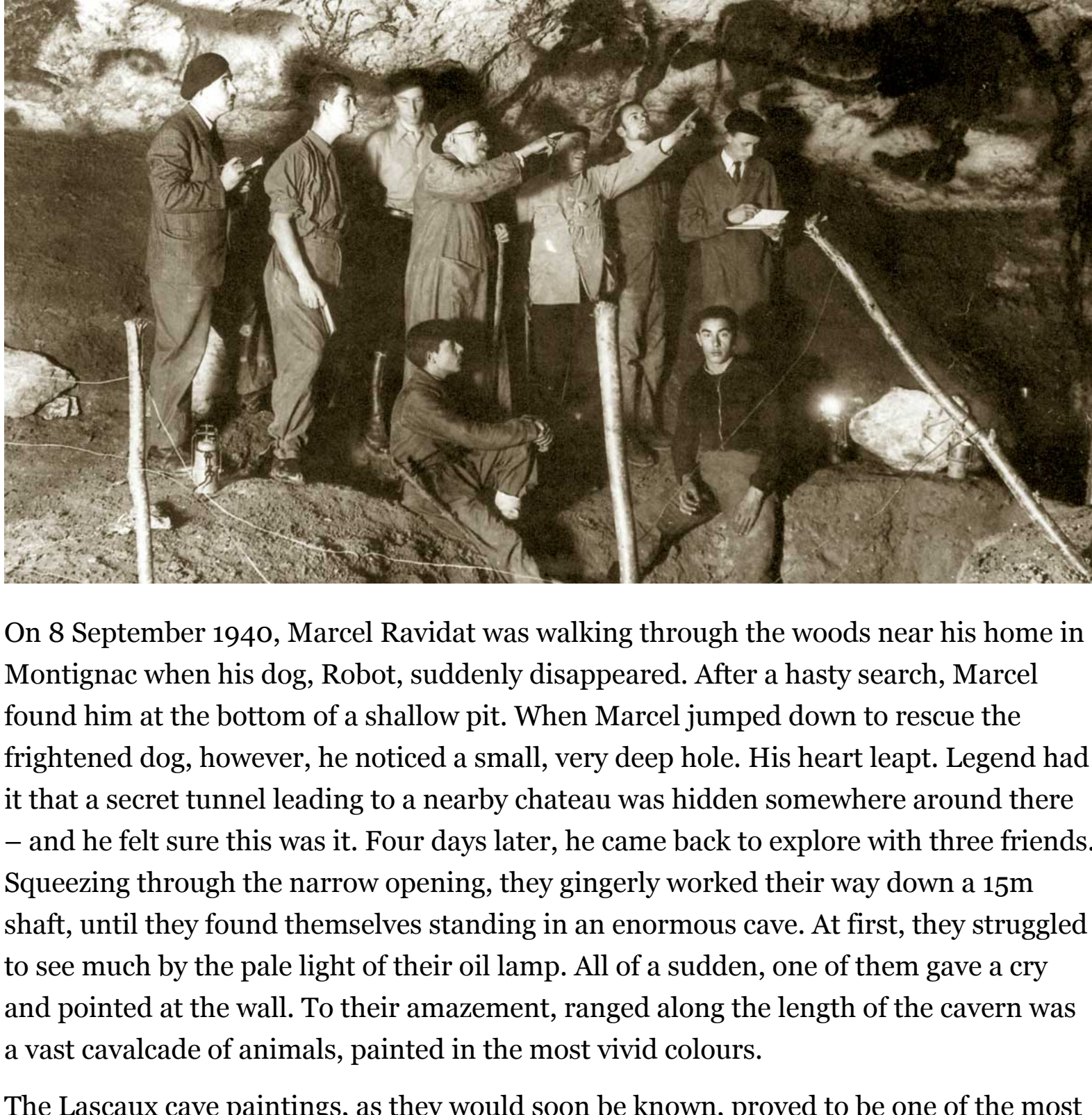
Lost to history

For a long time the role of those women who opposed the vote was missing from stories of the early women's movement. In recent years historians, such as Julia Bush, have given the anti-suffrage movement the detailed attention it deserves, recognising the popular appeal of the movement and restoring its female leaders to the historical record. This has yet to filter through to a wider audience, perhaps understandably: the anti-suffragette women represent an unfashionable and unpalatable view of the women's movement and an ideology at odds with modern notions of liberal feminism. Yet Ward and her fellow campaigners inhabited a world very hard for modern feminists to understand. While their views are now unfashionable, these women were as much a part of the early women's movement as those who supported votes for women. It is important to avoid retrospectively marginalising those whose opinions make people in the 21st century uncomfortable. The historian Brian Harrison who, in 1978, produced the first comprehensive study of the anti-suffrage movement in Britain, made the point

HORSES

Exploring the meaning of Lascaux's galloping herds.

Alexander Lee



On 8 September 1940, Marcel Ravidat was walking through the woods near his home in Montignac when his dog, Robot, suddenly disappeared. After a hasty search, Marcel found him at the bottom of a shallow pit. When Marcel jumped down to rescue the frightened dog, however, he noticed a small, very deep hole. His heart leapt. Legend had it that a secret tunnel leading to a nearby chateau was hidden somewhere around there – and he felt sure this was it. Four days later, he came back to explore with three friends. Squeezing through the narrow opening, they gingerly worked their way down a 15m shaft, until they found themselves standing in an enormous cave. At first, they struggled to see much by the pale light of their oil lamp. All of a sudden, one of them gave a cry and pointed at the wall. To their amazement, ranged along the length of the cavern was a vast cavalcade of animals, painted in the most vivid colours.

The Lascaux cave paintings, as they would soon be known, proved to be one of the most extensive and complete examples of Palaeolithic art in Europe, if not the world. Now dated to c.15000 BC they comprise a dazzling assortment of images, including some 6,000 representations of animals. Though painted by several different social groups, they are remarkable for the technical sophistication with which they were rendered. A range of pigments was used, including red hematite, yellow goethite, and black manganese. These were mixed with a binding agent, such as animal fat, clay, or water, to produce a rudimentary paint, or ground into a powder and ‘spat’ or blown onto the wall through a reindeer bone. Some of the paintings are so high that they can only have been reached using a specially built scaffold; while to produce others, the artists would have had to clamber down into a ‘well’.

A number of different animals are depicted, including stags, ibex, bison, aurochs (an extinct species of wild cattle), felines, a bear, a bird and even a rhinoceros. But by far the most common are horses. Unlike other creatures, which tend to be concentrated in certain places, horses are everywhere – and in huge numbers. By one estimate, they account for no less than 60 per cent of all identifiable animals in the Lascaux complex.

What is most striking about these horses is the intimate, even affectionate, familiarity with which they are portrayed. With their stocky build, short legs and spiky mane, they look similar to Przewalski's horse, still found in Mongolia today. Though they are shown in a variety of different shades and patterns, most appear in their ‘mating’ coats, with dun-coloured hair and occasionally a pale or dappled underside. Some are standing, others are walking. More often than not, they are galloping – racing across the grasslands of prehistoric France, or fleeing an unseen foe.



Detail of cave painting © ak-g-images.

The frequency with which they appear is puzzling, though. After all, horses were not domesticated until at least 10,000 years afterwards; and, though earlier cultures are known to have relied on them for both meat and hides, the same cannot be said for the communities which inhabited Lascaux. On the basis of bones found in the caves, it appears that reindeer were by far the most important source of food. Horses, by contrast, seem to have been rarely on the menu.

So why were the Lascaux painters so obsessed with them?

The cave before the horse

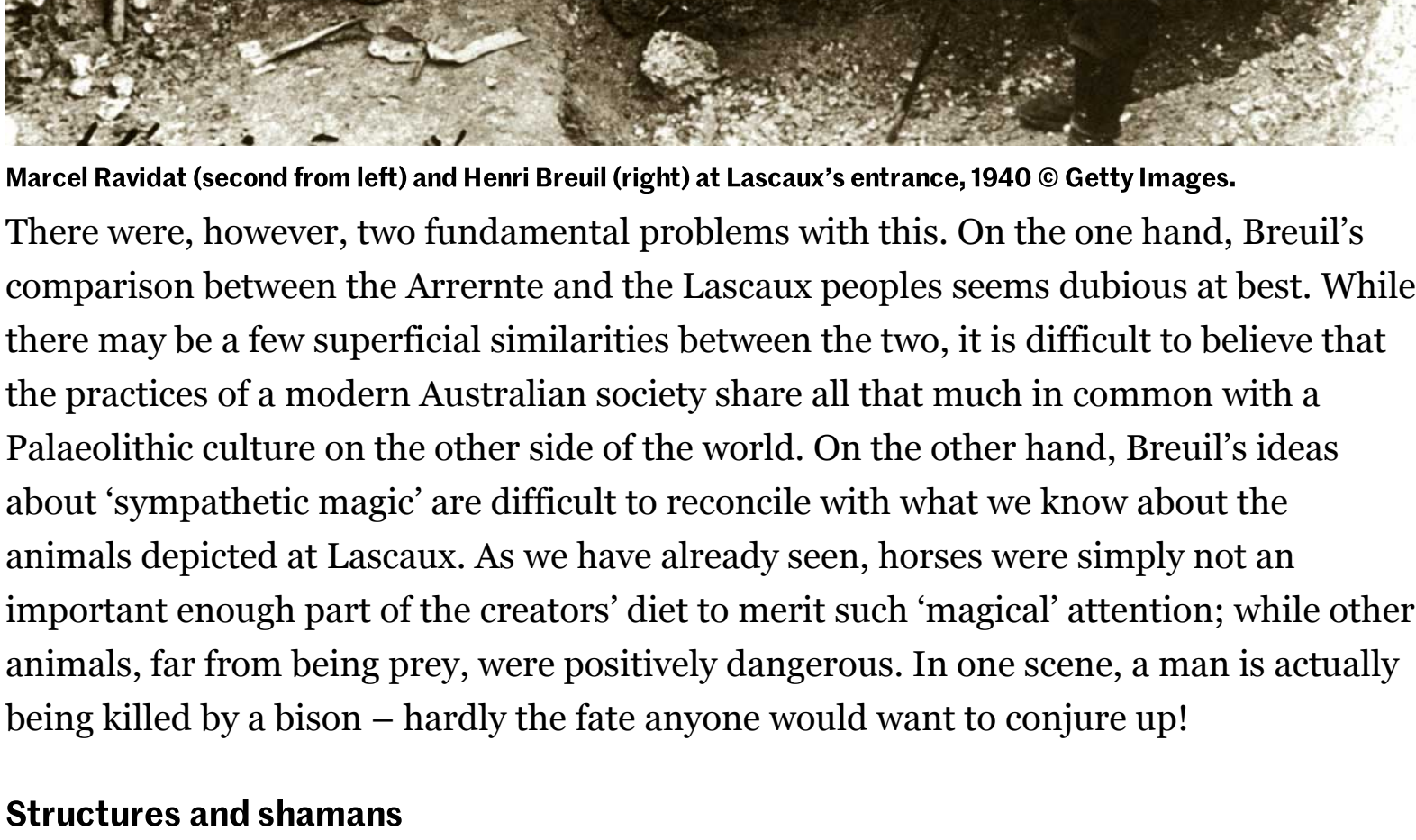
To answer this question, we first have to ask what purpose Palaeolithic cave paintings were meant to serve. This is a thorny problem, however. In the absence of any texts, which might give us a clear impression of the artists' visual culture, belief system and relationship with the natural world, it is difficult to say anything about how the Lascaux cave paintings were meant to be understood, let alone why horses played such an important role in them. So difficult is it, in fact, that some archaeologists have questioned whether anything meaningful can be said about their function at all. According to Paul Bahn, it is a dubious enterprise at best. ‘If the artist's testimony is unavailable’, he has argued, ‘the interpretation of the content of rock art is largely speculation, and to pretend otherwise is dishonest or an illusion.’ Others, however, are not so pessimistic. Emmanuel Anati, for example, has pointed out that, since Palaeolithic people were presumably able to understand the Lascaux cave paintings without recourse to anything beyond their own experience, we should be able to as well; it is just a matter of ‘getting into the right state of mind’.

But what is the ‘right state of mind’? And how should we ‘get into’ it?

Hunting magic

One of the earliest attempts to grapple with this problem was made by Abbé Henri Breuil. A pioneering scholar of Palaeolithic art, he was the first to study the Lascaux site systematically. In his view, the paintings could best be understood by analogy. Recognising that they had arisen from the daily experiences of a society that depended on hunting for its survival, he sought to explain their purpose by looking at how apparently similar cultures used such images in his own day. As an example, he chose the Arrernte people of central Australia. Though not alike in all respects, they, too, were hunter-gatherers, who frequently depicted animals in their rock art; and, since they viewed images as a form of ‘sympathetic magic’, Breuil assumed that the Lascaux painters had done the same.

The way it worked was simple. For Palaeolithic societies, Breuil argued, an image was the animal it represented – to such an extent that whatever happened on a cave wall would magically happen in real life. This was particularly true of the Lascaux horses. By painting pictures of horses being pierced by spears, Breuil claimed, the artists were ensuring the success of the next hunt. And in showing them in great herds, often in their mating coats, the hunters were willing there to be a plentiful supply of potential prey.



Marcel Ravidat (second from left) and Henri Breuil (right) at Lascaux's entrance, 1940 © Getty Images.

There were, however, two fundamental problems with this. On the one hand, Breuil's comparison between the Arrernte and the Lascaux peoples seems dubious at best. While there may be a few superficial similarities between the two, it is difficult to believe that the practices of a modern Australian society share all that much in common with a Palaeolithic culture on the other side of the world. On the other hand, Breuil's ideas about ‘sympathetic magic’ are difficult to reconcile with what we know about the animals depicted at Lascaux. As we have already seen, horses were simply not an important enough part of the creators' diet to merit such ‘magical’ attention; while other animals, far from being prey, were positively dangerous. In one scene, a man is actually being killed by a bison – hardly the fate anyone would want to conjure up!

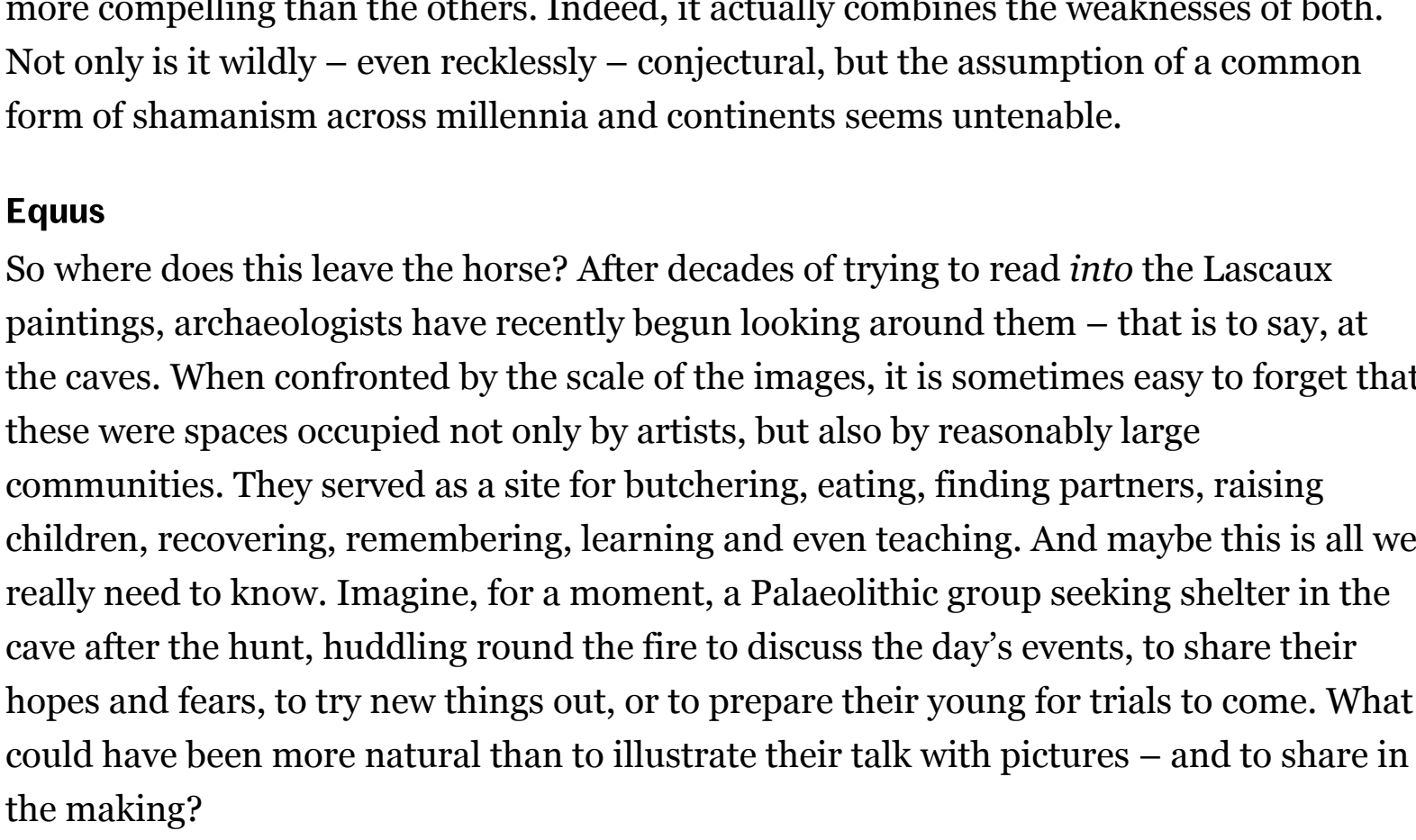
Structures and shamans

In the 1950s and 1960s, an alternative approach was proposed by Andrei Leroi-Gourhan and Annette Laming-Emperaire. In the belief that the cave paintings were a superficial expression of the deeper structures of thought characteristic of the society which created them, Leroi-Gourhan and Laming Emperaire attempted to look for hidden ‘patterns’ in the caverns and to attribute meaning to the distribution of abstract symbols and animal forms. On this basis, they suggested the cave could be read as the reflection of a spiritual world view based on the contrast between male and female. Thus, dots, dashes, bison and auroch were ‘masculine’ and ovals, squares, triangles and horses were ‘feminine’.

That horses were shown in their ‘mating’ coats was hence testimony to a powerful association between women and fecundity; while the frequency of their appearance was probably due to the importance of reproduction and nurturing to an increasingly settled, if still vulnerable, society.

The sheer arbitrariness of the approach was, however, difficult to overlook. In the 1990s, therefore, a third interpretation was put forward by the South African archaeologist, David Lewis-Williams. This returned to the idea that the paintings might have had some magical qualities. In a ‘New Age’ twist, however, it was based as much on neurology as on analogy.

For Lewis-Williams, the key to the cave's purpose lay in the abstract symbols. Noting that they were common to Palaeolithic art, he postulated that they were ‘form constants’ – geometric patterns commonly seen by people in a state of sensory deprivation or during drug-induced hallucinations. Since similar form constants commonly appear in images made by shamans – who often enter trance-like states for ritual purposes – he concluded that the Lascaux artists were likely to have been shamans, too. This suggested that the paintings were a record of the visual phenomena experienced during ceremonial ‘voyages’ to a spirit world – and that the animals represented the shadowy entities with which they sought to commune in the hope of healing sickness, changing the weather, or securing food. In this reading, horses would appear as a particularly important spirit, albeit one whose significance remains obscure.



Detail of cave painting © Bridgeman Images.

Ingenious though it may be, however, Lewis-Williams' ‘neurological’ approach is no more compelling than the others. Indeed, it actually combines the weaknesses of both. Not only is it wildly – even recklessly – conjectural, but the assumption of a common form of shamanism across millennia and continents seems untenable.

Equus

So where does this leave the horse? After decades of trying to read *into* the Lascaux paintings, archaeologists have recently begun looking around them – that is to say, at the caves. When confronted by the scale of the images, it is sometimes easy to forget that these were spaces occupied not only by artists, but also by reasonably large communities. They served as a site for butchering, eating, finding partners, raising children, recovering, remembering, learning and even teaching. And maybe this is all we really need to know. Imagine, for a moment, a Palaeolithic group seeking shelter in the cave after the hunt, huddling round the fire to discuss the day's events, to share their hopes and fears, to try new things out, or to prepare their young for trials to come. What could have been more natural than to illustrate their talk with pictures – and to share in the making?

If such was their purpose, it would explain much about their visual choices. It would explain why they would have given so little space to animals like the reindeer, which they could already kill with ease, yet so much to those like the bison, which threatened them. It could also provide a reason for the presence of handprints, spear-like images and other geometrical shapes. But most importantly, it would account for the fascination with horses. Given that horses are known to have been killed, but only rarely and with difficulty, it is easy to see why their abundance, speed and mating season might have exercised such a potent hold over the imagination. Having seen herds galloping across the plains, how could these people not have longed to catch them? How could they not have marvelled at their swiftness and strength? Perhaps, by painting them, they were teaching, hoping, yearning. Perhaps they, like Peter Shaffer's *Equus*, were simply crying out in love and defiance: ‘I am yours and you are mine.’

Alexander Lee is a fellow in the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance at the University of Warwick. His latest book is *Machiavelli: His Life and Times* (Picador, 2020).

TRUST IN CHANGE

Historians and curators in heritage organisations, such as the National Trust, do not invent the past, they uncover it.

Peter Mandler



A leader in the *Daily Telegraph*, published on 25 September and headlined ‘The National Trust needs to drop its woke nonsense’, propounded a series of theses about what the National Trust, the charity for heritage conversation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, exists to do (Scotland has a separate organisation). The job of the Trust, which has 5.6 million members and an annual income in excess of £630 million, ‘is to conserve, not comment’, was one thesis. But to conserve what? Things that ‘the nation holds dear’. Which nation? Well, the present one, or at least the *Daily Telegraph*’s idea of the present nation, which it thinks it understands pretty well, at least at a very high level of abstraction: ‘Most people’ value the National Trust’s sites out of a ‘love of place and character’. But then it appears that there are other stakeholders to be regarded. The Trust should not be casting aspersions on ‘the historical reputation of properties’ in a way that ‘breaks faith with the families that donated them’. So pointing out these properties’ associations with, for example, slavery, colonialism or homosexuality is out of bounds, because it ‘breaks faith’ with donors, regardless of whether the nation today might be interested in those things.

Frozen in time

This bundle of contentions about the right conduct of a heritage organisation betrays some of the same confusions that attended the recent debate about reinterpreting, pulling down (or putting up) statues. It seems to want to freeze our understanding of history at a particular point in time. On the face of it, that seems commonsensical for a ‘conservation’ or ‘preservation’ charity: what is being conserved or preserved if not something fragile from the past that might otherwise be lost? That is indeed why the UK has a listing system that identifies which buildings cannot (at least not easily) be demolished or allowed to fall into disrepair. The statue in Bristol of the slave trader Edward Colston, which was pulled down and thrown into the River Avon on 7 June 2020, was in fact listed as far back as 1977. But the listing system provides only a fairly basic form of preservation. It identifies structures that can’t be radically altered or destroyed. It says little or nothing about how they should be used, subsequent to their initial use, and nothing at all about how they should be interpreted.

Those things change all the time. The basic structure remains intact; but its context, its meaning, its ‘spirit’ changes as it passes through time and is used and interpreted by subsequent generations. That is why parties in Bristol had been seeking, at least since the 1990s, to reinterpret Colston’s statue with additional wording that would acknowledge his role in the slave trade; it was the repeated frustration of such efforts, especially in 2018–19, that led in the moment of Black Lives Matter to the targeting and subsequent toppling of the statue by protesters.

The *Telegraph* leader seems to appreciate this, at least to the extent of acknowledging both the intentions of the donors and the particular ‘historical reputation’ that they attached to their properties, as well as the qualities of ‘place and character’ that the nation today attaches to those same properties. But it does not follow through on this line of argument. What happens when the intentions of the donors and the values of the present-day nation conflict? At which point in time should the ‘historical reputation’ of a property be frozen? Must we feel for all time as the donors felt about their properties, any more than one must feel about Edward Colston as did the philanthropists of Bristol who chose to honour him in 1895?

For the nation

Take the National Trust’s collection of country houses. At the time of the Trust’s founding, most landowners objected in principle to the creation of a statutory body that would ‘sterilise’ good agricultural land by removing it from private ownership. Only a few prominent liberals in the landowning class thought there was a public-interest justification in preserving areas of outstanding natural beauty. These ‘enlightened’ few joined with conservationists, such as Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, to found the National Trust in 1895 and to accept in 1907 statutory powers to ‘promote the permanent preservation for the benefit of the Nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest’. (Nothing was said about the benefit of the donors.)

Again, most landowners had little idea and less concern about the ‘historical reputation’ of their properties. They were more concerned about keeping them afloat as profit-making enterprises at a time of agricultural depression. They cared more about the land (which they felt still held future value) than about their houses (which were often viewed as expensive encumbrances) and certainly more about the land than about their houses’ contents (which could be and were sold off in large quantities to stave off the sale of land).

Attempts to acquire for public benefit or even to ‘list’ their private properties were viewed as impertinences, or, worse, at a time of considerable political instability, revolutionary threats. It didn’t help that among the first aristocrats to donate their homes to the National Trust were the odd socialist (Sir Charles Trevelyan, whose Wallington Hall in Northumberland was in 1928 the first such property to be passed on to the Trust) or radical (Lord Lothian, who bequeathed his Norfolk seat, Blickling Hall, to the Trust in 1940).

A change of tune

It wasn’t until after the Second World War that some more (by no means all) landowners began to change their tune. The war had left, by neglect or requisition, many of their houses uninhabitable. The National Trust, which was now committed to recognising country houses as important historic buildings, was offering to take their houses off their hands, sometimes on highly favourable terms – for example, making informal agreements to leave the family in residence. (In these early years, the Trust was not necessarily expecting them to hand over land as well.) At this point, more landowners saw the value in playing up the ‘historic reputations’ of their homes, even claiming for themselves a role as ‘custodians’ for the ‘national interest’. Language that their parents and grandparents would have deemed ‘revolutionary’ seemed now better to serve their tastes and interests.

Mildly pornographic

If the owners remained in residence – as they did in the houses that remained outside the National Trust’s scheme but were now increasingly opened to tourists – then they retained a good deal of control over how the house was presented and interpreted. Their continuing residence was itself seen, for the first time, to be an integral part of the country house’s popular appeal. Even the most *outré* renovations (within the limits of listed-building status) could be approved as reflecting the unique taste and culture of the ‘family’; consider the psychedelic murals, some mildly pornographic, with which the Marquess of Bath decorated Longleat in the 1960s. Where the National Trust exercised its own control, one historical fashion succeeded another. Even ‘authenticity’ was a moving target, as houses that had accreted over centuries could be restored to any one of a number of past states. For a time the 18th-century pastiches of John Fowler were highly favoured, creating an ideal-type country house for the public to fasten on. Fashion has moved on, and some of Fowler’s re-creations are seen as far too imaginative.

If the variability of the ‘preservation’ of historic structures is so great, how much greater must be the variability of their interpretation. The most cursory glance at country-house guide books – which go back to the 18th century – will show you how differently they are viewed by successive generations. The Victorians loathed the Georgian: *Murray’s Guide* said of Petworth in 1863 that it had not ‘the slightest architectural attraction’, resembling ‘an indifferent London terrace’. Early 20th-century taste loathed the Victorian; there was then practically no Victorian building anywhere in the country that wasn’t slated for demolition. As late as 1961 the Duke of Westminster pulled down nearly all of his very grand Victorian country house, Eaton Hall. Tudor and Elizabethan associations have remained consistently popular, so much so that they get invented. At Chatsworth visitors were long shown Mary Queen of Scots’ apartments in a house that had essentially been demolished and rebuilt around 1690.

Myriad interpretations

The point is that great historic buildings are complex beasts with many layers and a myriad of possible interpretations. Each generation finds in them what it wants to find. Their ‘historical reputations’ cannot be and are not fixed, least of all by their ‘donors’, many of whom cared little for any historical reputation, others of whom had only recently discovered it. The right of private owners to destroy their own property was fiercely defended right up until the 1960s. Historic buildings are better protected today, by legislation and regulation, but ‘preservation’ can and does go only so far. New layers of interpretation are always being added; in good William Morris style, they add to but do not alter or destroy underlying layers. When the National Trust highlighted the East India Company connections of Osterley Park in West London – thanks to the innovative research of the historian Margot Finn and her ‘East India Company At Home’ team – it drew in to this somewhat neglected urban oasis large numbers of Asian residents of West London, who might never previously have given Osterley a moment’s thought. If attention to slavery and colonialism, or queer history, alerts new audiences to the tangled heritages of the National Trust’s country houses, how can that be a bad thing? These associations are not being invented; they are being uncovered. Previous generations had found them negligible, or unpleasant. They are cultivating for the current generations a new idea of ‘place and character’ to add to the old ones and keeping our heritage alive. Not to worry, *Daily Telegraph*, these new-found associations will be overlaid soon enough by something ... newer.

Peter Mandler teaches modern British history at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and is the author of *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (Yale, 1997). His latest book is *The Crisis of the Meritocracy: Britain’s Transition to Mass Education since the Second World War* (Oxford, 2020).

FLANNELLED FOOLS

A history of sport in England hits a six.

Dan Jackson



Bill Shankly may have been kidding when he remarked that some supporters think ‘football is a matter of life and death, but I assure you, it’s much more serious than that’. Yet it is impossible to understand the English people without an appreciation for the place of sport in their history and how it embodies their love of liberty and tradition, from the cock pit to the cricket field. As Robert Colls argues in *This Sporting Life*, sport has long been a preoccupation of the English, but it is more than merely a pastime for what Kipling called ‘flannelled fools at the wicket, muddled oafs at the goal’. It is bound up, in Colls’ view, with:

playing the game, enjoying the land, sensing the liberty, respecting contestation, valuing home, showing a bit of heart, recognising it in others, knowing that not everyone is political, or has to be, that not everyone knows what they think or (whichever comes first) how to say it, and understanding above all that sport is an enduring part of our liberty.

In the 19th century it was sometimes said that to interest an Englishman in war it was best to compare the conflict to a game (whereas to interest a Frenchman in games one must compare them to a war) – as the schoolboy’s voice did when it rallied the ranks in Henry Newbolt’s poem *Vitai Lampada*. Newbolt’s poetry and the public school sporting ethos encoded much of the high Victorian stoicism and stiff-upper-lippery that inspired the footballers and cricketers of the two world wars to great heights of gallantry, from Billy Nevill leading the Middlesex Regiment over the top and dribbling a football into no-man’s-land, to the tally-hoing fighter aces of 1940.

The hunting cries of Leicestershire are familiar territory to Colls, who although a native of South Shields, built his academic career in the two universities of Leicester (to this day Leicester City FC take to the field to the strains of the Post Horn Gallop). Those Tyneside roots have given him an inevitable passion for football, but Colls’ omnivorous interests as a historian makes him equally at home on the hunting field as on the football terrace. His opening chapter on the chic and dangerous world of riding to hounds is a useful reminder of the centrality of equine pursuits in English culture. After all, it is telling that the Duke of Wellington fought the Battle of Waterloo in the blue coat of the Beaufort Hunt and that at Balaklava cavalry scouts had informed the Light Brigade that the going was ‘good’ in the Valley of Death.

In Colls’ thesis the observance of custom is the bedrock of England and, therefore, of freeborn English men and women. As even the great jurist Lord Blackstone put it, for all the grandeur of the British constitution, it was nothing more than a set of customs. Therefore, the carnage of bear-baiting in Stamford or Shrovetide football in Ashbourne were matters of deep political principle and would yield only very reluctantly to civilising influences by the interfering middle classes. Such is *This Sporting Life*’s more theoretical argument that emerges from time to time, but at heart this book is the best kind of social history: vivid, revelatory and penned by an author who seems to know the byways of every county in England.

Colls helps us explain the origins of stock English sporting types, those blacksmiths on the village green like Beefy Botham and Freddie Flintoff, or sporting gents such as Lord Lonsdale and Douglas Jardine, and the role of class on the sports field. He can help us understand, too, the thrilling freedom that sport provided, not in an abstract sense, but for the pitmen who yearned to stretch their legs after hours underground (and how this, plus their athleticism and instinctive teamwork, made them such formidable footballers), or for youths like ‘Smithie’, the borstal boy in Alan Sillitoe’s *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, who finds in his cross country runs mental clarity as much as an exhilarating sense of release. Yet Colls is alive, too, to the misery of compulsory sport for many, with interesting diversions into the history of the gymslip, or why working-class girls – traditionally dragooned early into domestic chores in a way that boys seldom were – simply didn’t have the time or energy for the back-lane football that preoccupied their brothers.

But this is a joyous book of dazzling scholarship. ‘I see sport now as all the more extraordinary for its ordinariness’, he concludes, ‘for how it has reached into every part of our imagination.’ Colls has shown us how a sort of cultural archaeology can locate the roots of Englishness in the places where custom brought the people together – and, since the first race was run and ball was kicked, has made them such consistently good sports.

This Sporting Life: Sport & Liberty in England, 1760-1960
Robert Colls
Oxford 416pp £25

Dan Jackson is the author of *The Northumbrians: North East England and Its People, A New History* (Hurst, 2019).

BENEATH THE BOMBS

Understanding the immediacy and confusion of the Blitz.

Daniel Todman



As the UK disintegrates, the Second World War and the NHS sometimes seem like the only shared stories we have left. References to the Blitz – both positively (national endurance) and negatively (the number of deaths) – at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic combined these twin myths. A new book revisiting how people experienced the Blitz is therefore opportune.

Edited by the late Paul Addison and Jeremy Crang, *The Spirit of the Blitz* follows *Listening to Britain: Home Intelligence Reports on Britain's Finest Hour, May to September 1940* (2011). Like its predecessor, *The Spirit of the Blitz* reproduces the morale reports created by the Home Intelligence department of the British Ministry of Information, this time from September 1940 through the dark winter to June 1941. A good introduction explains how historians now understand these documents. The reports themselves are reproduced almost in full, divided into three sections: September to December 1940, and January to March and April to June 1941. Each is supported with an introductory timeline and the book has a useful glossary to help readers understand references that would have been commonplace at the time.

The Home Intelligence reports have long been a staple for historians of the British Home Front in the Second World War. Available at the National Archives and on microfilm at research libraries, they have been picked over by those interested not just in the maintenance of morale under German bombs, but in public reactions to rationing and the changing international situation, as well as the effect of wartime experiences on party politics. *Listening to Britain* made the full reports from the period of the Battles of France and Britain available in published form for the first time. More recently, the AHRC-funded project 'A Publishing and Communications History of the Ministry of Information, 1939-45' has made all the morale reports throughout the war, including those from the period covered in *The Spirit of the Blitz*, as well as the investigations of the Wartime Social Survey, freely accessible online. It is reasonable to ask whether that negates the point of this book.

I would argue not. Such digital resources come with disadvantages as well as benefits. The online reports will be used more frequently by researchers who want to use their access to the whole corpus to scrutinise the text in new ways. Those who prefer the impressionistic sense of ebb and flow from reading over months of material in sequence may prefer the book, with its weekly bulletins. Anyone who enjoys reading published wartime diaries – a popular genre – will also find pleasure in the way the episodic structure captures the immediacy of events and reactions and just how confusing the whole thing was to those who experienced it.

The comparison with a diary is much more apt than any idea that the reports represent an objective and absolute 'truth' about the nation's morale. Everyone involved was essentially well intentioned – towards the aim of assessing popular attitudes if not necessarily to each other – but their task was complex, the resources limited and their methods and findings challenged within government at the time. During the period covered by *The Spirit of the Blitz*, Home Intelligence was losing a bureaucratic battle sparked by its reporting of public criticism of other Whitehall departments. Its reliance on the impressionistic reports produced by Tom Harrisson's Mass-Observation organisation – which other civil servants regarded as too pessimistic about the state of the popular mood – did not help. Ironically, the resultant sidelining of Home Intelligence from any significant policy decisions and the reduction in its reporting cycle from daily to weekly created some of the space it required to improve its methodology and widen its sources of evidence. Just as important was the departure of its first director, Mary Adams, and her replacement by her former deputy Stephen Taylor. Adams, a science graduate and the first female BBC television producer, had the imagination to get Home Intelligence started, but lacked the ruthless skill in infighting to keep it going. In contrast, Taylor's bureaucratic survival skills were more developed. He was also driven to reform Home Intelligence by his hatred of Harrisson (on whose alleged cannibalism, while on anthropological expeditions, Taylor collected a file of evidence). Those who seek to draw historical parallels might note the differences borne out by all this: the analysis of public opinion in a crisis was difficult and politically controversial and the wartime government managed successfully without caring too much what people thought.

For all their frustrating vagueness ('it is being widely said', 'many people think that') and the incomprehension apparent as middle-class respondents reported on working-class attitudes, the reports collected in *The Spirit of the Blitz* remain a valuable source. We should be glad they exist and not just because if the task of surveilling morale been left to the Home Office, as the latter would have liked, the official evidence would be even less accurate and more relentlessly upbeat. Used with the necessary scepticism, they show us both how horrendous it was to be beneath the bombs and how quickly those who had no choice but to stick it out adapted. They remind us also how much everyday life outside the worst blitzed cities was being transformed over that winter of 1940-41 – not by the Luftwaffe's rain of explosive and incendiary, but by the demands for labour and material required to build the military machinery that would enable victory. The relentless constraints on living standards that resulted, the requirement to submit to regulation and the demand for something better in the future might all seem a more relevant and hopeful comparison to our own era than the shortlived drama of the Blitz.

The Spirit of the Blitz: Home Intelligence and British Morale, September 1940 - June 1941
Edited by Paul Addison and Jeremy A. Crang
Oxford 544pp £30

Daniel Todman's latest book is *Britain's War: A New World, 1942-1947* (Allen Lane, 2020).

THE SPY WHO LOVED

Puncturing the myths surrounding ‘Agent Sonya’.

Julie Wheelwright



In 1989, as the twice-decorated KGB agent Colonel Ursula Kuczynski shored up the floundering GDR at public rallies in East Berlin, British spy writers turned to tired clichés. ‘Agent Sonya’, wrote Chapman Pincher, had ‘no doubt, obliged her comrades with some easy sex.’ The novelist Michael Hartland assumed she was lured into Soviet intelligence by her lover, Richard Sorge. With so little known about ‘Agent Sonya’, such portraits carried weight.

But two years later, Kuczynski’s memoir *Sonya’s Report* was published in English and she was giving interviews in London. She was bemused by such claims, telling me that she was heavily pregnant when she first met Sorge and far more concerned with being exposed as a Soviet agent than with affairs of the heart. In fact, she was recruited through Sorge’s lover, the American writer Agnes Smedley.

Ben Macintyre’s biography, which draws on a wealth of archival material released over the past two decades, translations of Kuczynski’s novels (under the pen name Ruth Werner) and her intimate correspondence, offers a corrective. The Sonya of Macintyre’s account is a complex character, a committed communist from her childhood in 1920s Germany and an ambitious woman who endured long separations from her children. As Kuczynski said: ‘Every woman has that conflict and mine was worse because of the danger involved.’

Born into a large, bourgeois Jewish family in Berlin in 1908, Ursula joined the Communist Party as a teenager. Her sympathy for the disabled veterans of the Great War, who begged on the streets, fuelled her idealism to create an egalitarian society. After moving with her architect husband Rudi Hamburger to Shanghai, Smedley, then a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, recruited her into ‘illegal work’. Mrs Hamburger loathed the ‘alien world’ of Shanghai’s expatriate community but, as Macintyre reveals, their home was perfect as a safehouse for Sorge, who met his Chinese communist contacts there.

Macintyre adds depth to the known details of Kuczynski’s story, confirming that Sorge, ‘the most senior spy in Shanghai’, was Sonya’s lover. As her eldest son Michael would comment: ‘She was always in love with [Sorge].’ When Sorge left Shanghai, she was recommended for espionage training in Moscow, which meant leaving Michael, then aged two. According to Macintyre, ‘Ursula defended that bleak decision for the rest of her life. But never quite forgave herself.’

Ursula’s next assignment was in Japanese-occupied Manchuria, where, with her fellow Soviet agent, Johann Patra, with whom she had a daughter, they aided the Chinese communists. Despite the complication of a baby and her Jewish religion, Ursula was sent to Poland and then Switzerland, where she married another fellow agent, an Englishman, Len Burton. Ironically, the greatest threat posed to her ‘revolutionary work’ came in 1940 when her nanny, Olga Muth, shopped Ursula to an unconvinced British Consulate in Montreux.

The family fled to England where Ursula would pull off an espionage coup as the ‘messenger boy’ for Klaus Fuchs, whose formulas for the atomic bomb she transmitted to Moscow. When the Burtons departed for Berlin in 1950, following Fuchs’ arrest, Ursula went undetected. She had survived the Stalinist purges and evaded detection for nearly two decades. Maybe the spy catchers’ obsession with female agents offering ‘easy sex’ provided professionals like Kuczynski with the perfect cover.

Agent Sonya: Lover, Mother, Soldier, Spy

Ben Macintyre

Viking 377pp £25

Julie Wheelwright is the author of *Sisters in Arms: Female Warriors from Antiquity to the New Millennium* (Osprey, 2020).

HOW TO REIN YOUR DRAGON

How South-East Asia has dealt with China.

Le Hong Hiep



The spectacular rise of China over the past four decades has brought the world unprecedented opportunities and challenges, but no region has experienced this new geopolitical reality more keenly than South-East Asia. The 11 regional countries have benefited enormously from China’s economic rise, but they are also the first to feel the pounding movements of the awakening giant.

Sebastian Strangio’s *In the Dragon’s Shadow: Southeast Asia in the Chinese Century* offers an insightful account of how China’s rise has shaped the region’s economic and strategic landscape, as well as the way China’s smaller neighbours have struggled to deal with the emerging superpower. Each of these 11 nations faces similar challenges in dealing with China, yet, as Strangio writes, ‘no two countries approach China in quite the same way’. The different approaches are informed by their different historical experiences and different perceptions of the threats and opportunities brought about by China’s rise.

Among the nine countries examined in the book (Brunei and East Timor are excluded), Vietnam is the most China-wary, while Cambodia is the most pro-China. Vietnam has benefited economically from the rise of China, which is now its largest trading partner and source of imports, but the country’s bitter historical experience of repeated invasions and the boiling South China Sea dispute have made Vietnam constantly wary of China’s growing influence. Hanoi is reluctant to join China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and has allowed the establishment of only one Confucius Institute. At the same time, it has been building military capabilities and continuously upgrading ties with the US and its allies to counterbalance China in the South China Sea.

On the contrary, Hun Sen’s Cambodia has unwaveringly embraced China despite the fact that Beijing sponsored the Khmer Rouge, Hun Sen’s bitter enemies during the 1970s and 1980s. For Cambodia, the benefits offered by China in the form of trade, investment, tourism, concessional loans and, especially, its support for Hun Sen’s authoritarian regime, have far outweighed any possible security concerns. Cambodia even went so far as to act, in many analysts’ view, as a proxy for China in the South China Sea issue.

The seven other countries in the middle find themselves more or less on either side of the ‘love-hate China’ spectrum, although most of them try to maintain a middle ground. Singapore, for example, has tried to be a friendly partner of China given the strong economic ties between the two countries, but has also been straightforward in resisting unwarranted political influences from Beijing and its expansive South China Sea claims, which threaten Singapore’s own survival and prosperity as a micro-state highly dependent on respect for international law and maritime trade. This has generated significant bilateral tensions, including China’s seizure of nine Singaporean armoured personnel carriers en route from military exercises in Taiwan in 2016 and Singapore’s expulsion in 2017 of a Chinese-born American academic for what it said to be his covert effort to influence Singapore’s foreign policy on behalf of an unnamed foreign government, widely believed to be China.

Meanwhile, as a claimant state in the South China Sea, Malaysian elites, especially those in the military, have also become concerned about China’s growing muscle. Yet Malaysia has so far adopted a friendly approach towards China, especially under the premiership of Najib Razak. Apart from the close bilateral cultural and economic ties maintained by Chinese Malaysians, who account for almost a quarter of the country’s population, China’s huge investments in Malaysia’s infrastructure projects under the BRI and Beijing’s willingness to back an embattled Najib amid his ongoing 1Malaysia Development Berhad corruption scandal have also played their part.

Throughout the book what stands out is the depth of China’s influence over South-East Asia, rooted in deep bilateral economic ties and the strong connections maintained by generations of ethnic Chinese migrants living in the region. This influence, however, is also both volatile and fragile; the region will not become an established sphere of influence for China anytime soon. Apart from the South China Sea dispute, which constantly puts pressure on relations, domestic political changes in respective countries may also reverse China’s diplomatic fortunes, as shown by the case of Myanmar or Malaysia. Countries like the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia have also recently taken steps to moderate their friendly attitude towards Beijing. More importantly, the intensifying strategic rivalry between the US and China means that regional countries will be under Washington’s increased scrutiny if they move too close to China. Even China’s closest partners like Cambodia or Laos may also have to think twice about tying their fate with China’s.

Strangio’s rich experience in the region accumulated through his many years living in Cambodia and Thailand, coupled with field trips to interview various sources across South-East Asia, enables him to provide readers with thorough and well-informed analyses. Built upon the author’s deep understanding of each country’s history as well as how they have interacted with China in the past, the book familiarises readers with not only regional countries’ contemporary relations with China but also their history and domestic politics. Strangio’s journalistic writing style makes it superbly readable; he should be applauded for this important and timely contribution, a must read for anyone interested in both the past and likely future of China and South-East Asia.

In The Dragon’s Shadow: Southeast Asia in the Chinese Century

Sebastian Strangio

Yale 360pp £20

Le Hong Hiep is Fellow at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore and the author of *Living Next to the Giant: The Political Economy of Vietnam’s Relations with China under Doi Moi* (ISEAS, 2016).

ILLYRIA FOUND

An intriguing glimpse into the complex politics of the late 19th century Balkans.

Barnaby Rogerson



Johann Georg von Hahn is not a fluent and engaging travel writer. From the evidence of these selected translations from the original German, his journeys into the mountain valleys of central Albania (extracted from his three-volume *Albanian Studies*) and his last expedition, *Journey from Belgrade to Salonika*, are unlikely to be published in English in full. Fortunately there are other rewards, such as his pioneering collection of Albanian folk tales (good, dark stuff, trailing elements of mythology) as well as his examination of the love of young men for adolescent boys which remained a traditional passage of life for some of the highland tribes of Albania: ‘The lover’s feeling for the boy is pure as sunshine ... It is the highest and most exalted passion of which the human breast is capable.’

Von Hahn was born in Frankfurt in 1811 and studied law at Heidelberg, which qualified him to work, from 1834 to 1843, in the newly independent nation of Greece, which had been given a Bavarian king. Von Hahn later switched to the service of Prussia (attached to their Athens consulate from 1844), after which his loyalties migrated to Vienna. His appointment as the Austro-Hungarian consul at Ioannina in 1847 began his infatuation with all things Albanian, as well as with the cosmopolitan Pashalik of Rumelia, ruled by Ali Pasha between 1789-1822. His later career posts, consul on the island of Syros (1851) and consul-general at Athens (1869), gave him the time to complete his pioneering *Albanian Studies*. An additional collection of Greek and Albanian folk takes was printed in 1864. Von Hahn supplied the Austro-Hungarian chancellery with statistical information about trade goods, population and the ethnicity and religious loyalties of the different communities within Albania. His last major expedition into Albania had a clear strategic purpose: the surveying of a prospective railway route to Thessaloniki.

All the foreign powers in this period were interested in understanding the age-old division of Albania between two rival dialects: Gegs and Tosks. This linguistic frontier sat astride the faultline between the Roman Catholic West and Orthodox East, even though Albania had a Muslim majority. The Gegs occupied the northern highlands of Albania and under the Bayraktar system could serve as mercenary soldiers under their clan chieftains. The southern Tosks occupied the more fertile southern valleys and were content to remain part of the Ottoman Empire, ideally as a near autonomous ally. They would dominate Albania during Enver Hoxha’s communist era.

So this collection of von Hahn’s writings provides an intriguing, if sideways, glimpse into the complex politics of the late 19th century. In the end I found its greatest reward was to introduce me to the work of Robert Elsie (1950-2017), the translator-editor. If von Hahn is the father of Albanian studies, Elsie is his great heir. Elsie was fascinated by languages and through the University of Bonn was able to travel within the sealed frontiers of Albania in the 1970s. He would translate or write over 60 books about Albania, from collections of contemporary poets to the national epic, researching tribal history as well as collecting historical texts, early travel accounts and the first photographic studies. Like von Hahn, he would subsidise this scholarly work through a Germany salary, working for the Foreign Ministry (1982-87) and later as a translator (2002-13) for the International War Crimes Tribunal. Robert Elsie’s vast knowledge of Albania is still shared with the world through a website subdivided into five subject branches. In 2017 his body was flown to lie in state at the National Library of Albania before being buried in his adopted homeland.

The Discovery of Albania: Travel Writing and Anthropology in the Nineteenth-Century Balkans
Johann Georg von Hahn, Robert Elsie
Bloomsbury 224pp £28.99

Barnaby Rogerson is publisher at Eland Books.

MANLESS CLIMBING

Breaking into the ‘masculine public sphere’ of the interwar years.

Ann Kennedy Smith



Shiela Grant Duff was 21 and fresh out of university when she witnessed the violence that followed the Saar plebiscite in 1935. ‘The Nazis can tell their enemies by their eyes’, she wrote in her report for the *Observer*, warning of the German people’s growing support for Nazi brutality. By the time that war broke out, Grant Duff had become one of the world’s foremost experts on Czechoslovakia. She never forgot that in 1934 the editor of *The Times* had turned her down as foreign correspondent, suggesting that she might send the paper some ‘fashion notes’ from the Continent instead.

Writing, risk-taking and the refusal to conform to ‘gendered expectations’ unite the 13 women who feature in Sarah Lonsdale’s *Rebel Women Between the Wars*, who used a range of strategies to break into the ‘masculine public sphere’ of the interwar years. Journalism was one tried and tested method of gaining entrance to this well-defended fortress. As Lonsdale points out, many of her subjects had grown up reading the newspapers of the Edwardian women’s suffrage groups and had learned from their organisation and campaigning zeal. In 1928 the former suffragist Ray Strachey wrote that ‘the main fight is over and the main victory is won’, but there were many high walls still to be scaled.

Edith Shackleton is chiefly remembered (if at all) as the ‘last mistress’ of the poet W.B. Yeats, but in 1930 she was Fleet Street’s highest paid woman journalist, earning more for her book reviews than many senior men at the *Evening Standard*. Margaret Lane refused the safety of the women’s page and (like Grant Duff and Martha Gellhorn) chose the financially precarious position of freelance reporter to participate in journalism on her own terms: Lane’s interview with ‘Scarface’ Al Capone made the front page of the *Daily Express* in October 1931. Specialist professional and sporting journals edited by women provided another way for their voices to be heard. In 1921 engineering student Claudia Parsons published her first article in *The Woman Engineer* and mountaineer Dorothy Pilley co-founded the all-woman Pinnacle Club to promote the subversive practice of ‘manless climbing’.

Engaging and pacily written, *Rebel Women Between the Wars* reveals how formal and informal networks enabled individual women’s participation and activism. In her maiden speech to the House of Commons in 1931, the Labour MP Leah Manning described the nations of the world as ‘roped together like Alpine climbers’ and in May 1937 the international associations she belonged to helped her to transport 4,000 Basque refugee children to Southampton. There were downsides to such powerful networks. The Jamaican poet and playwright Una Marson, who in 1938 became the first black woman to work for the BBC, felt betrayed when she discovered that even apparently forward-looking English feminists put Empire and the interests of the West above racial equality.

There has been a vogue for feminist anthologies recently, featuring potted biographies of ‘remarkable women’ of the past, and this book’s title seems to nod to that trend.

Lonsdale acknowledges the limitations of studying such a selective, middle-class, mostly British group, but *Rebel Women Between the Wars* is not just about these 13 women. It is also about the thousands of others they stood for, ‘working assiduously at the defences of the fortress’ and for all those who continue to challenge gendered expectations today.

Rebel Women Between the Wars: Fearless Writers and Adventurers

Sarah Lonsdale

Manchester University Press 432pp £20

Ann Kennedy Smith is writing a book about Cambridge women.

A HISTORIC TURNING POINT?

Will historians see 2020 as the peak of a global crisis – or will the world continue on its perilous course?

Suzannah Lipscomb



Few of us would have believed at the end of 2019 that the coming year would be more awful than the year past. But 2019 had one final gift for us: 31 December was the day that authorities in Wuhan, China confirmed they were treating dozens of cases of an unknown illness. There have been, at the time of writing, 1,173,189 deaths from Covid-19 from some 44 million confirmed cases; the death toll is likely to be 1.5m by the year end.

In the UK, it has been a year of loss: deaths of loved ones and lockdown restrictions have been accompanied by growing inequalities, especially for children; increased rates of domestic violence; and the extreme hardship of job losses. Throughout society, people have faced redundancy and unemployment; the creative industries, arts and heritage have had an especially gruelling time.

In this year, the Black Lives Matter movement and the death of George Floyd alerted us to longstanding racism and prejudice, challenging us to confront myths about the past and to recognise the relationship between our understanding of history and present injustices. We've seen both the toppling of Edward Colston's statue and the renaming of the Geffrye Museum and a doubling down of those who think things should never change. The Secretary of State for Culture in September informed organisations such as Historic Royal Palaces, the Imperial War Museum and the V&A that 'the government does not support the removal of statues' and expects the approach of heritage institutions 'to be consistent with the government's position'. If that sounds a little autocratic, it might alert us to a more prevalent world phenomenon.

For, while the pandemic, BLM and the US presidential election have filled the field of vision, to take a historian's stance on the present requires us also to think about what we did not know or what we might not be heeding.

What I suspect future historians will note is that Covid has facilitated another sort of contagion: what the economist Amartya Sen calls 'a pandemic of autocracy'. Even through the mechanisms of democracy, often in the name of managing Covid, we have seen rising authoritarianism and populism. Poland re-elected President Andrzej Duda, who opposes press freedoms and LGBT rights and seeks to overhaul the judiciary in ways that some fear will undermine the rule of law. In Venezuela, human rights reports say that President Maduro's government has dramatically increased the number of 'forced disappearances' and extrajudicial killings. In Zimbabwe, over 100,000 people have been arrested since March for violating Covid restrictions. In India – which has suffered extraordinary impoverishment in the face of Covid and a healthcare system taken to the brink of collapse – the Hindu-nationalist BJP government is practising the 'preventative detention' of opposition politicians and the restriction of Muslim rights. In Nigeria, there have been massive protests against police brutality. And in China, the Uighur people have faced forced labour to keep up production during the pandemic, while Hong Kong's independence has come to an end and critics – such as Ren Zhigiang, who mocked President Xi Jinping's handling of the crisis, or Xu Zhangrun, who was critical of the removal of presidential term limits – have been arrested.

An unwillingness to leave office characterises many regimes. Alassane Ouattara, president of Ivory Coast, has announced he will stay on for a third term. In a referendum on the Russian constitution, 78 per cent of voters backed allowing President Putin to stay in office until 2036, though the constitutional change had in fact already been approved by parliament. Protests and strikes in Belarus and the consequent brutality of authorities have followed a disputed election in which Alexander Lukashenko, president since 1994, grimly tries to cling onto power.

Maybe future historians will point to the precipitous rise of child exploitation in 2020 – 1.56m children working in cocoa production in Ghana and Ivory Coast, a huge increase in child labour in India to deal with pandemic poverty, or well-documented evidence of thousands of children working in cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, producing a key component for the rechargeable lithium batteries that power our mobile phones.

Or perhaps what historians will note especially is that 2020 was the year in which the last remaining intact ice-shelf in the Canadian Arctic – the size of Manhattan – broke up; when a heatwave in Siberia reached temperatures scientists had not predicted until 2100; when irreparable damage was done to the ecosystems of the Galapagos Islands; species decline accelerated.

Another thing few would have believed in 2019: in posterity's view of 2020, Brexit might go unmentioned.

Suzannah Lipscomb is Professor of History at the University of Roehampton and author of *The Voices of Nîmes: Women, Sex and Marriage in Early Modern Languedoc* (Oxford, 2019).

GLOSSARY

‘Words ought to be a little wild, for they are assaults on the unthinking’
– John Maynard Keynes

1MDB scandal

In which an alleged \$4.5bn was misappropriated from 1Malaysia Development Berhad, a state fund, into various private bank accounts, including that of then prime minister (and fund chairman) Najib Razak. Stolen money allegedly helped fund the Martin Scorsese film *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) and a Picasso painting for its star Leonardo DiCaprio.

The Bestselling Mrs Ward

Mary Ward is among the select group of Brits to ‘break America’: according to Publishers Weekly, she wrote the bestselling novel in the US in both 1903 (*Lady Rose’s Daughter*) and 1905 (*The Marriage of William Ashe*).

Gothic

Eerie and shapeshifting term connecting Alaric, Cologne Cathedral, *Wuthering Heights* and Siouxsie Sioux. Gothic milestones include: the *Codex Argenteus* (for its translation of the Bible into the Gothic language), sixth century; Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (first application of the term to literature), 1764; and *The Doors* (first band described as ‘Gothic’), 1967.

Justin Martyr

AD 100-65. Apologist author of the *First Apology*, an unsuccessful attempt to convince Antoninus Pius to cease Christian persecution: ‘The world suffers nothing from Christians but hates them because they reject its pleasures.’ ‘What else should I be? All apologies’ – Kurt Cobain.

Louis ‘le Gros’

The portly French king shares his self-explanatory epithet with, among others: the Carolingian emperor Charles ‘Crassus’ III (839-88); Afonso ‘o Gordo’ II of Portugal (1185-1223); and James ‘the Fat’ Mor Stewart (c.1400-29). ‘Shaming an already-shamed population is, well, shameful.’ – Lindy West.

‘Silent Night’

The most successful version of which was recorded by Bing Cosby in 1935. The carol joined tango (Argentina), the Mediterranean diet (various) and barkcloth making (Uganda) on UNESCO’s thorough ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ list in 2011.

‘Survival’

Title track from Bob Marley’s 11th studio album, 1979. The artwork features 49 flags of African countries (and Papua New Guinea) as well as the slave ship *Brooks*. ‘[It finds] Marley close to his peak, boldly appraising global black unity from a Rastafarian viewpoint’ – Rolling Stone.

‘Vitai Lampada’

Poem of 1897, later described by its author Henry Newbolt as ‘a kind of Frankenstein’s monster’. ‘The river of death has brimmed his banks / And England’s far, and Honour a name / But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks: “Play up! play up! and play the game!”’

Wild West

When did the west become ‘wild’? An unlikely claimant for first published use of the phrase is Charlotte Brontë in her novel *Shirley* (1849): ‘What suggested the wild West to your mind?’

VINCENT BROWN

We ask 20 questions of leading historians on why their research matters, one book everyone should read and their views on Edward Gibbon ...

Why are you a historian of slavery?

I found my calling when I heard Bob Marley sing about black people: ‘We’re the survivors, like Daniel out of the lion’s den.’

What’s the most important lesson history has taught you?

How it unfolds in discernible but unpredictable patterns.

Which history book has had the greatest influence on you?

C.L.R. James’ *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*.

What book in your field should everyone read?

Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*.

Which moment would you most like to go back to?

Back to any future free of war, exploitation and indignity.

Which historian has had the greatest influence on you?

David Barry Gaspar, Steven Hahn and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich each helped me cultivate my interests, hone my skills and find my voice in indispensable ways.

Which person in history would you most like to have met?

Paul Robeson.

How many languages do you have?

My native English, plus fractions of Spanish and French.

What’s the most exciting field in history today?

Environmental and/or gender history.

Which genre of history do you like least?

History that takes no risks, changes no minds and reaffirms smug certitudes.

What historical topic have you changed your mind on?

I began my historical studies convinced that slavery had deprived African Americans of history, culture and tradition; I’ve spent the rest of my career atoning for my error.

Is there a major historical text you have not read?

I’m so far behind, this question makes me feel anxious.

What’s your favourite archive?

The British National Archives at Kew have been so so good to me.

What’s the best museum?

The National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC.

Normans or Anglo-Saxons?

Bantus.

Rome or Athens?

Rome. It was the setting for so many great movies during my childhood.

Braudel or Gibbon?

W.E.B. Dubois.

Michelangelo or Frida Kahlo?

Frida Kahlo.

What is the most common misconception about your field?

That the history of slavery is the history of black people.

What will future generations judge us most harshly for?

Our inability to live lightly upon the Earth.

Vincent Brown is Charles Warren Professor of History and Professor of African and African-American Studies at Harvard University. His latest book, *Tacky’s Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Belknap, 2020), is a finalist for the 2020 Cundill History Prize.